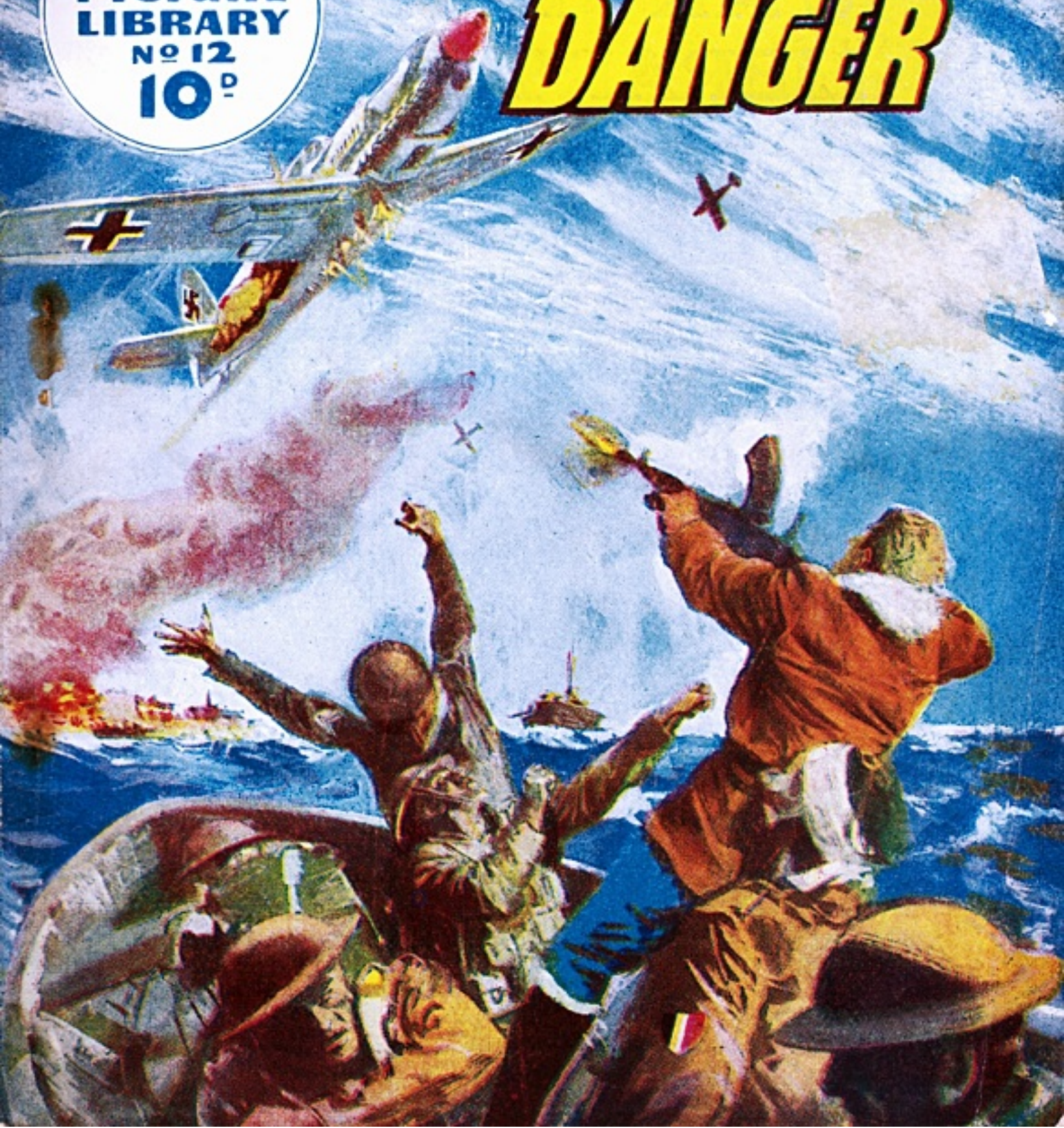


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COURSE FOR DANGER

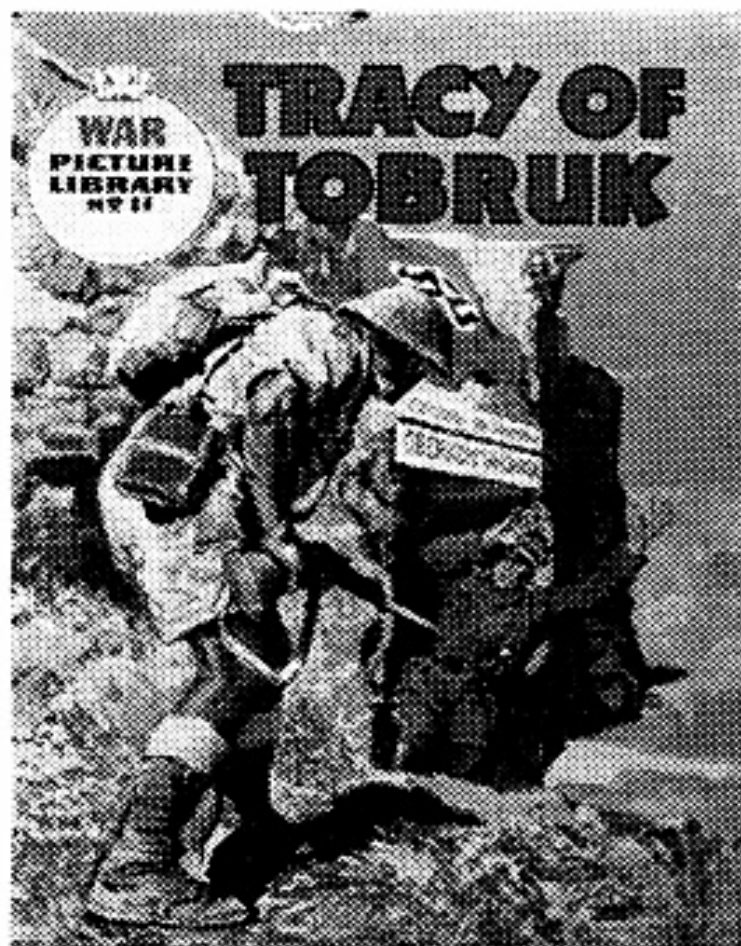


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Course for Danger

ON 28TH MAY, 1940, THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN FRANCE BEGAN THE LONG MARCH BACK TO THE SEA... HARASSED BY HITLER'S ARMED MIGHT AT THEIR HEELS, AND POUNDED BY WINGED DEATH FROM THE SKIES. BELGIUM HAD FALLEN, FRANCE WAS TOTTERING, BUT DESPITE THIS, FRENCH TROOPS WERE FIGHTING VALIANTLY ALONGSIDE BRITAIN'S OWN SOLDIERS IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP THE ROADS TO DUNKIRK OPEN. FOR AT DUNKIRK, LAY THE ONLY HOPE OF ESCAPE FROM THE DEATH TRAP THAT WAS FRANCE.



Chapter 1

A BITTER BLOW

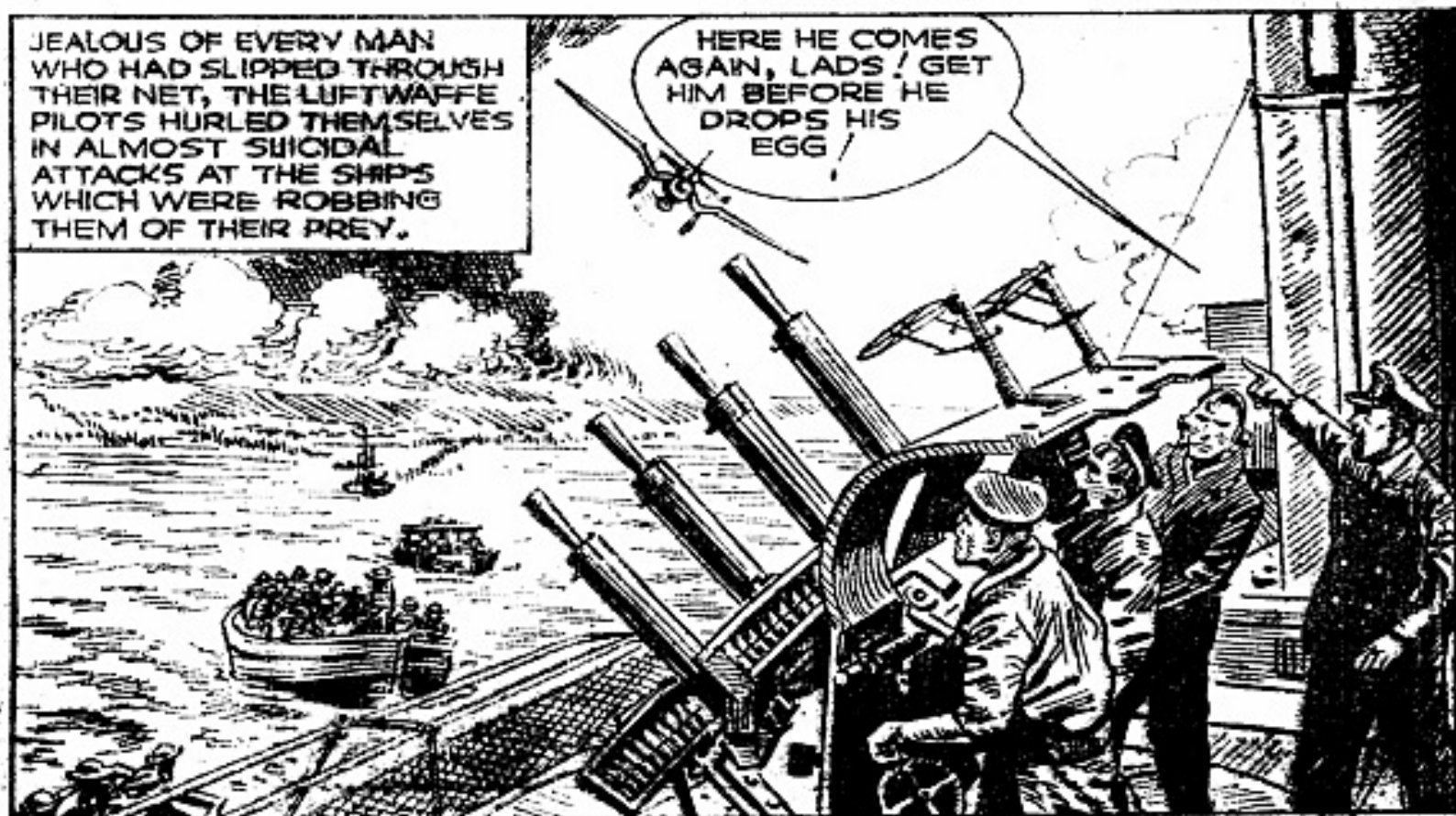
AMONG THE SAND DUNES AROUND DUNKIRK THE TATTERED REMNANTS OF A ONCE-FINE ARMY WERE GATHERING. PATIENTLY, THE SOLDIERS ENDURED THE CEASELESS ONSLAUGHT OF STUKA DIVE-BOMBERS AS THEY AWAITED THEIR TURN TO ENTER THE BOATS WHICH WERE TO FERRY THEM AWAY FROM THAT HOSTILE SHORE.

YAH! MISSED, YOU NASTY-LOOKING OLD BUZZARD!

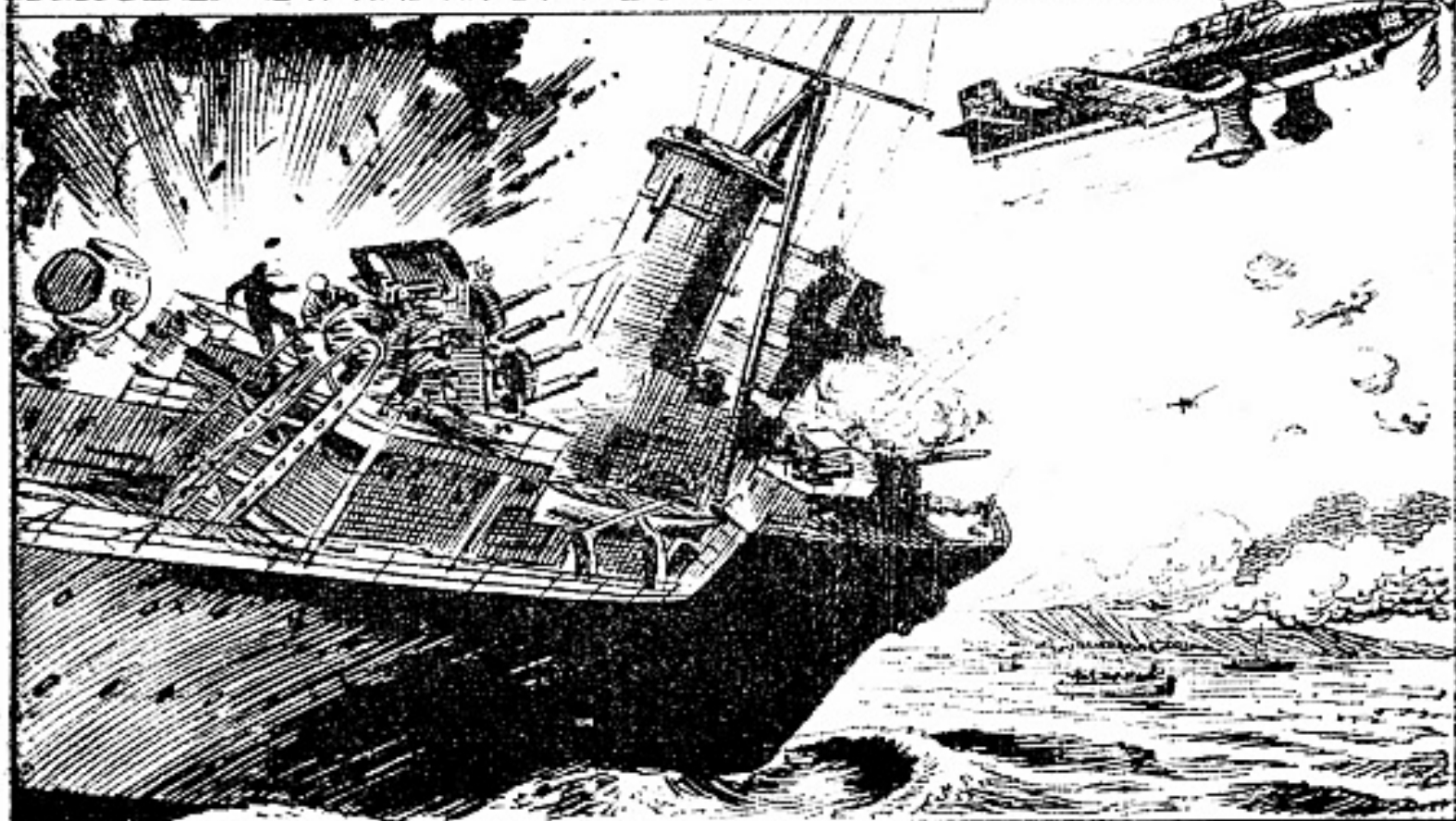


JEALOUS OF EVERY MAN WHO HAD SLIPPED THROUGH THEIR NET, THE LUFTWAFFE PILOTS HURLED THEMSELVES IN ALMOST SUICIDAL ATTACKS AT THE SHIPS WHICH WERE ROBBING THEM OF THEIR PREY.

HERE HE COMES AGAIN, LADS! GET HIM BEFORE HE DROPS HIS EGG!



IT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE THAT THE ENEMY PLANE COULD SURVIVE THAT TORNADO OF FLYING LEAD. BUT IT DID, AND SECONDS LATER, THE SLEEK DESTROYER SHUDDERED AS IT WAS HIT BY THE STUKA'S BOMB.



A GREAT HOLE WAS GOUGED OUT OF THE DECK OF THE DESTROYER, ITS STARBOARD POM-POM BATTERY WAS SHATTERED, AND THE CREW KILLED OR WOUNDED.



DAMAGE REPORT COMING IN, SIR. STARBOARD POINT FIVE BATTERY DESTROYED. THREE MEN KILLED... CHIEF PETTY OFFICER CONRAD AND FIVE MEN WOUNDED.

YOUR FATHER WOUNDED, MISTER CONRAD? GET BELOW AND SEE HOW HE IS... I'LL HOLD THE FORT HERE.

THANK YOU, SIR!



Course For Danger

HIS FACE TAUT WITH ANXIETY, LIEUTENANT DONALD CONRAD, R.N., HURRIED TO THE WARDROOM, USED IN ACTION AS THE SHIP'S HOSPITAL.

IS CHIEF PETTY OFFICER CONRAD SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, FARNES?

IT IS HIS RIGHT LEG, SIR... PRETTY BAD, TOO, BUT HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT. YOU'LL FIND HIM AT THE FAR END OF THE WARDROOM!



DONALD KNELT BESIDE THE STILL FORM OF HIS FATHER. THE OLD SAILOR'S HEAD TURNED, AND HE GAVE A RUEFUL GRIN WHEN HE SAW WHO HIS VISITOR WAS.

HALLO, DONALD! WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? THIRTY YEARS IN THE NAVY... AND I CATCH A BLIGHTY ONE IN OUR FIRST REAL ACTION!

YOU'RE ALIVE, DAD, THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS. I WAS WORRIED STIFF WHEN I SAW WHERE WE WERE HIT.



CHIEF PETTY OFFICER CONRAD'S FACE SADDENED...

NOW THERE'LL ONLY BE ONE CONRAD IN THE NAVY, DONALD... BUT YOU'LL DO ME PROUD, LAD, THAT I KNOW, IF ONLY YOUR YOUNG BROTHER, PETER, WOULD TAKE TO THE SEA IN THE SAME WAY AS YOU HAVE, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY LIFE'S AMBITION TO HAVE TWO SONS WHO WERE OFFICERS IN THE FINEST SERVICE THERE IS...



UNBEKNOWN TO THE TWO SAILORS, FATHER AND SON, THE YOUTH THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT, EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD PETER CONRAD, WAS AT THAT MOMENT NOT MORE THAN HALF A MILE FROM THEM, DRAWING CLOSE TO THE BEACH OF DUNKIRK.

ANY MORE
FOR THE SAUCY
SAL?

AYE, THERE'S ENOUGH WOUNDED
HERE TO FILL YOUR BOAT, LADDIE...
AND MORE TO COME.



GENTLY, THE SOLDIERS LAID THEIR WOUNDED COMRADES IN THE OLD MOTOR BOAT... THEN MOVED AWAY TO AWAIT THEIR TURN WHEN IT SHOULD COME.

THIS IS ALL YOU
CAN MANAGE...
WE'LL WAIT FOR THE
NEXT BOAT.

OKAY, CORPORAL, THERE'S PLENTY
MORE CRAFT COMING, ALL SHAPES
AND SIZES.



MOTOR CHUGGING, PETER'S BOAT DREW AWAY FROM THE FORESHORE... BOWS POINTED TOWARDS ENGLAND.

LOOK... THERE'S A PLANE COMING TOWARDS US. IS IT ONE OF OURS?

NO, IT'S A PERISHIN' JERRY! WHERE'S THAT BREN?



THE BLACK-CROSSED PLANE FLASHED OVER THE LITTLE CRAFT, AND FOR A MOMENT, THE MEN THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO IGNORE THEM. BUT THEN IT WENT INTO A STEEP BANKING TURN ROUND THE BOAT, AND THE SOLDIERS' HEARTS SANK.

WE'RE FOR IT NOW! HE'S GOING TO GIVE US THE TREATMENT!

IF ONLY I COULD HOLD THIS BREN STEADY...



HERE, GIVE IT TO ME, SOLDIER! HE HASN'T BEATEN US YET!

A HAIL OF STEEL - JACKETED BULLETS FROM THE MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTER LASHED THE WATER AROUND THE MOTOR BOAT INTO FOAM... AND PETER STOOD UPRIGHT, THE BREN GUN FIRMLY CRADLED AT HIS HIP.



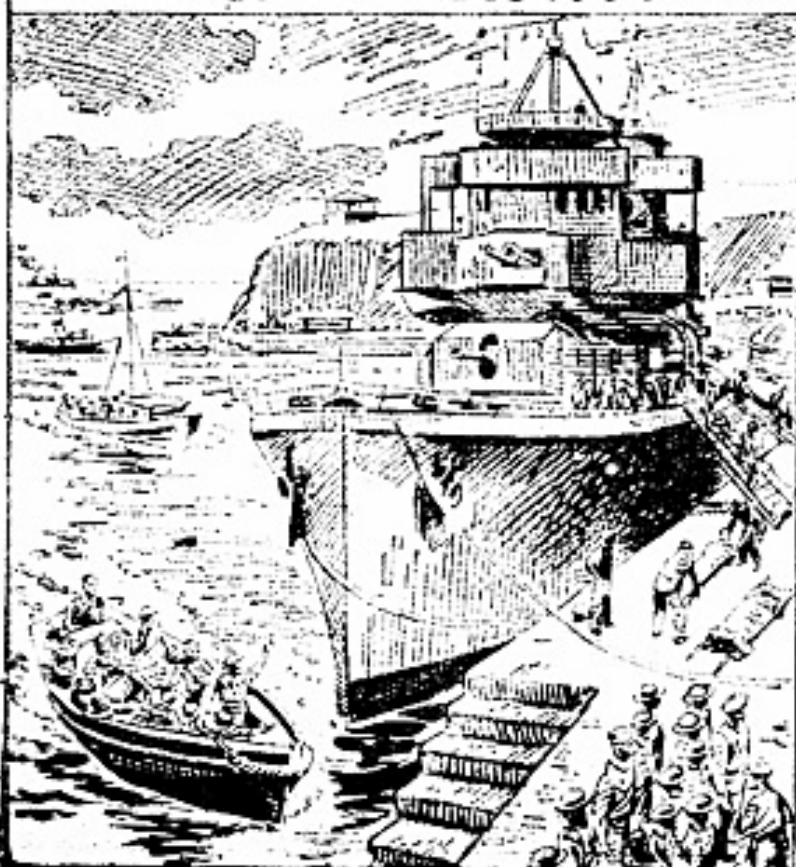
WITH A THUNDER OF SOUND, THE GREAT BLACK SHAPE STREAKED OVERHEAD... AND THE BREN GUN'S FIRE BIT DEEP INTO ITS SLEEK FUSELAGE...



THEN A ROUSING, TRIUMPHANT CHEER CAME FROM THE THROATS OF THE SOLDIERS... FOR THE ENEMY PLANE FALTERED, AND AT FULL SPEED, NOSED STRAIGHT DOWN INTO THE CHANNEL WATERS...



THE REST OF THE JOURNEY TO THE HAVEN OF BRITAIN'S SHORES WAS UNEVENTFUL, AND TWO HOURS LATER PETER STEERED THE SAUCY SAL INTO A SOUTH COAST HARBOUR...



WHILST THE WOUNDED SOLDIERS WERE BEING HELPED INTO WAITING AMBULANCES, PETER CLIMBED ON TO THE QUAY. ONLY THEN DID HE NOTICE THAT THE DESTROYER MOORED TO THE QUAYSIDE NEARBY WAS THE SHIP IN WHICH HIS FATHER AND BROTHER DONALD WERE SERVING.



Course For Danger

PETER CONRAD'S UNSPOKEN QUESTION WAS ANSWERED, FOR ALMOST IMMEDIATELY HE SAW HIS BROTHER STANDING BESIDE A LADEN STRETCHER WHICH WAS BEING LOWERED ON TO THE GROUND. HE RAN FORWARD. . .



THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER LOOKED REGRETFULLY AFTER HIS YOUNGER SON AS HE STRODE AWAY TOWARDS THE QUAYSIDE STEPS. . .



TWO DAYS LATER, THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER WAS STIRRING RESTLESSLY IN HIS HOSPITAL BED . . . FOR PETER HAD NOT COME TO SEE HIM, AND HE WAS ANXIOUS, KNOWING THE PERILS OF THE BEACHES AT DUNKIRK.

THERE'S A VISITOR TO SEE YOU, CHIEF PETTY OFFICER. YOUR SON!

GOOD! IT'S HIGH TIME THAT LAD CAME TO SEE ME, SISTER!



THE DOOR OF THE WARD SWUNG OPEN . . . AND THERE STOOD A KHAKI-CLAD FIGURE. THE OLD SAILOR'S JAW DROPPED IN STUNNED AMAZEMENT . . .

HALLO, DAD, HOW ARE YOU?

W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THAT UNIFORM—
YOU HAVEN'T JOINED THE ARMY, SURELY?



PETER FLUSHED AS HIS FATHER'S ANGRY SHOUT ECHOED THROUGH THE WARD.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THE ARMY, DAD. THEY'RE A GRAND BUNCH OF CHAPS... I'VE MET ENOUGH OF THEM THESE LAST FEW DAYS TO KNOW THAT. YOU SEEM TO THINK THAT THE NAVY'S THE ONLY WORTHWHILE SERVICE.

AND SO IT IS! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LIVE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN ONE OF MY SONS JOINED THE ARMY!



THE YOUNG SOLDIER'S FACE SET STONILY.

I'M SORRY YOU FEEL LIKE THIS, DAD... VERY SORRY. I ONLY HOPE THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND. PERHAPS I'D BETTER LEAVE!



THERE WAS NO REPLY FROM THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER. FILLED WITH BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT, HE STARED BLINDLY AWAY FROM HIS SON.

Chapter 2.

UNDER FIRE



PETER CONRAD'S HEART WAS HEAVY AS HE RETURNED TO HIS TRAINING DEPOT. HE FOUND THE NEXT FEW WEEKS OF ARMY LIFE A MIXTURE OF EXCITEMENT AND BOREDOM. THE INTEREST OF HANDLING WEAPONS AND FIRING ON THE RANGES... THE MONOTONY OF DRILL AND FATIGUE DUTIES... AND ALL THE TIME NAGGING AT THE BACK OF HIS MIND THERE WAS THE MEMORY OF THE PAINFUL SCENE WITH HIS FATHER...



DURING THE CRITICAL MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED THE FALL OF FRANCE, BRITAIN FRANTICALLY BUILT UP HER STRENGTH AGAIN. AIRCRAFT ROLLED OFF THE PRODUCTION LINES... NEW DIVISIONS WERE FORMED AND WELDED INTO FIGHTING UNITS. THE UNITED KINGDOM BECAME AN ARMED CAMP, SEPARATED FROM THE ENEMY BY A NARROW STRIP OF WATER.

BUT BRITAIN WAS NOT CONTENT TO SIT BACK AND AWAIT THE ENEMY. THE GENERAL STAFF DECIDED TO FORM SELF-CONTAINED UNITS WHICH COULD STRIKE AT THE ENEMY IN THE FORTRESS OF EUROPE. MEN OF SPIRIT, WITH A LOVE OF ADVENTURE WERE CALLED FOR...



VOLUNTEERS ARE REQUIRED FOR SPECIAL INFANTRY UNITS CALLED COMMANDOS. IT IS PLANNED THAT THEY SHOULD CARRY OUT GUERRILLA OPERATIONS AGAINST THE ENEMY AFTER UNDERGOING SPECIAL TRAINING.

ONE OF THE FIRST TO VOLUNTEER WAS PRIVATE PETER CONRAD. IMPATIENT TO GET TO GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY... AND PERHAPS SHOW HIS FATHER HOW MISTAKEN HE WAS.



TWO-TWO-FIVE PRIVATE P. CONRAD. WHEN DO WE LEAVE, SARGE?

YOU'RE AN EAGER BEAVER, LAD. THEY'LL COLLECT YOU WHEN THEY WANT YOU!

TWO WEEKS LATER, AFTER A LONG, TEDIOUS TRAIN JOURNEY, PETER AND A DOZEN OTHER SOLDIERS FROM THE TRAINING DEPOT REACHED THEIR NEW UNIT ON A DESOLATE PART OF THE SCOTTISH COAST.

NO SLIPPING OFF HOME FOR A WEEKEND LEAVE HERE, BILL.

WHERE'S THE NEAREST CINEMA, SARGE?



COMBINED TRAINING CENTRE

30

TWENTY SEVEN MILES AWAY, CHUM. BUS RUNS ONCE A WEEK. BUT DON'T WORRY, AFTER A DAY'S TRAINING HERE, YOU'LL BE TOO TIRED TO WORRY ABOUT THE FLICKS.

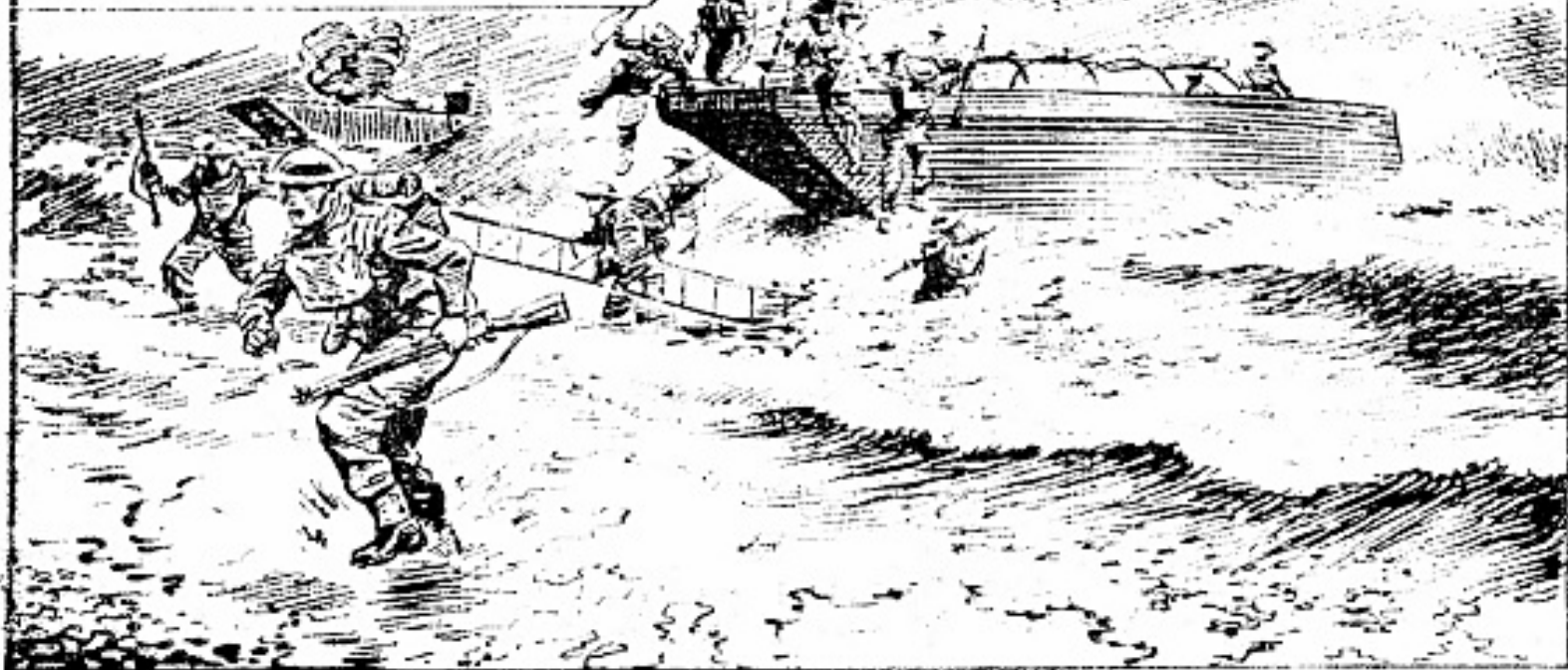
FROM THEN ON, THEIR TRAINING BECAME REALLY TOUGH. BUT PETER REVELLED IN THE ASSAULT COURSE. . .



THE CLIFF CLIMBING . . .



. . . THE PRACTICE LANDINGS . . .

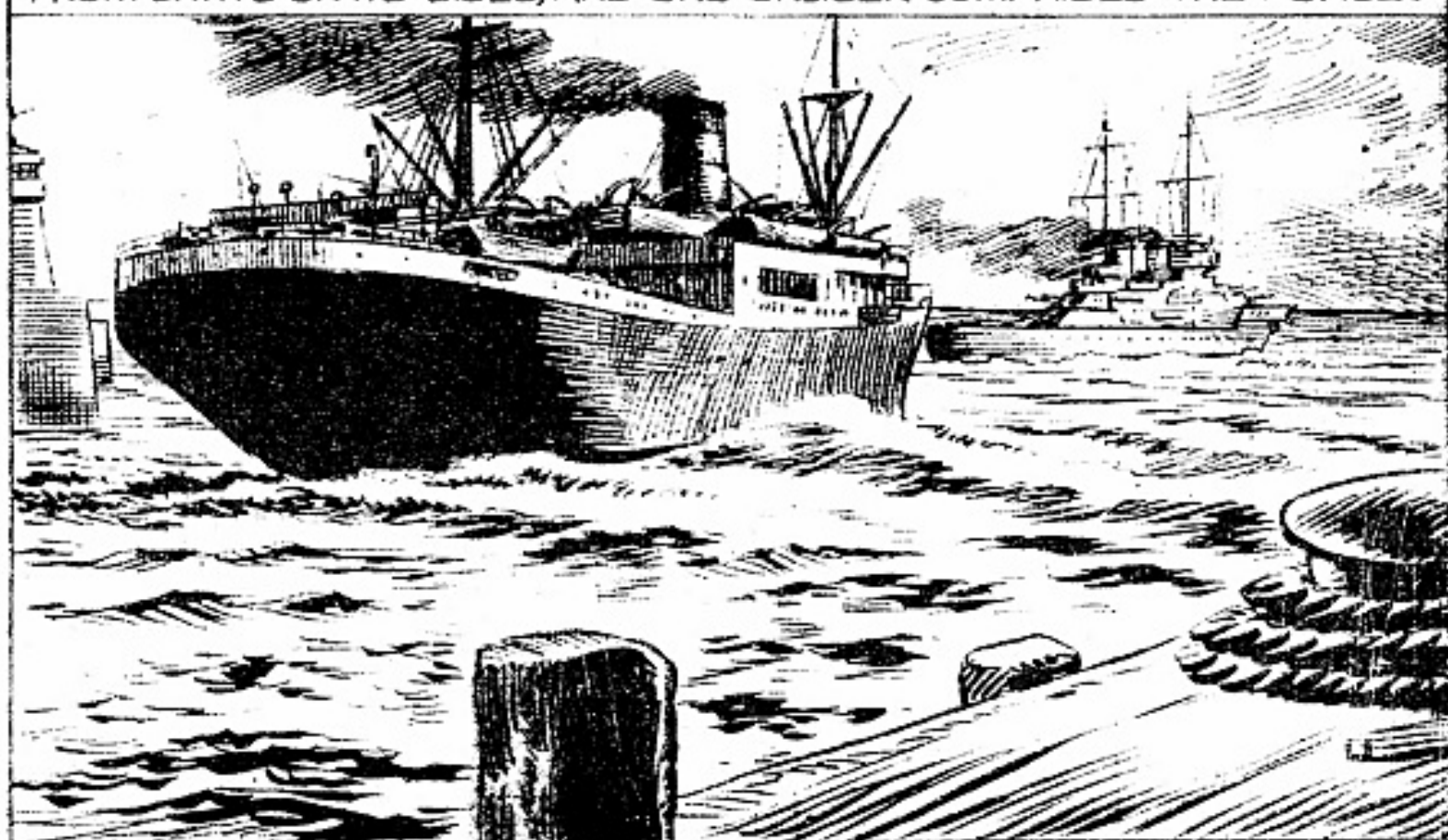


THEN CAME THEIR FIRST MISSION INTO ENEMY TERRITORY. THE YOUNG COMMANDOS WERE BY NOW AS HARD AS NAILS, CONFIDENT AND SELF-RELIANT, MASTERS OF THEIR DANGEROUS TRADE...

WE ARE PART OF THE FORCE WHICH IS TO ATTACK THE SMALL MINERAL ORE PORT OF HALNO IN SOUTH WEST NORWAY. WE GO IN UNDER THE COVER OF A NAVAL BOMBARDMENT OF THE BATTERY COVERING THE ENTRANCE TO THE HARBOUR, AND ONCE IN, WE DO AS MUCH DAMAGE AS POSSIBLE IN THE AVAILABLE TIME. YOUR COMPANY COMMANDERS WILL GIVE YOU FURTHER DETAILS. GOOD LUCK TO YOU ALL!



TWO DAYS LATER, THE COMMANDOS SAILED FROM A SCOTTISH PORT. AT THAT STAGE OF THE WAR, NEITHER THE MEN, THE WEAPONS NOR THE SHIPS WERE AVAILABLE FOR A LARGE-SCALE RAID, AND ONE PASSENGER SHIP, ADAPTED TO CARRY THE TINY ASSAULT CRAFT DANGLING FROM DAVITS ON ITS SIDES, AND ONE CRUISER COMPRISED THE FORCE.



IN THE LAST HOUR OF DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN, THE SHIP HAD SLIPPED SILENTLY IN TOWARDS THE RUGGED COAST OF NORWAY. SOMEWHERE AHEAD, THE CRUISER WAS APPROACHING ITS POSITION. . . IN FIFTY MINUTES THE BOMBARDMENT WOULD START. . .

JUST LIKE THE
MERSEY TUNNEL
IN A BLACKOUT,
PETE. WHAT'S THE
TIME?

NEARLY AN
HOUR TO GO
YET, BILL!

ALL TROOPS
TO THEIR BOAT
STATIONS IN TEN
MINUTES,
PLEASE!

AS THE LAST WAVE OF COMMANDOS, LADEN WITH WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT, CLAMBERED DOWN HEAVY NETS INTO THEIR LANDING CRAFT, THE SILENCE WAS SHATTERED AND THE SCENE WAS LIT BY BRILLIANT GUNFLASHES.



PETER CONRAD WAS IN ONE OF THE FIRST LANDING CRAFT TO RUN ASHORE. THE ENEMY WAS ALERTED AND VIOLENT MACHINE GUN AND SMALL ARMS FIRE CRISS - CROSSED THE APPROACHES TO THE PORT.



THAT FIRST VALIANT CHARGE TOOK THE COMMANDOS AMONG THE BUILDINGS AND WAREHOUSES AROUND THE PORT AREA. ALREADY THE RESISTANCE WAS LESSENING . . .

LANCE CORPORAL CONRAD, CARRY ON WITH YOUR TASK. TAKE SIX MEN AND GO ALONG THE SOUTH COAST ROAD TO THE WIRELESS STATION - DESTROY IT / IT SHOULD NOT TAKE YOU LONG !



MAKING USE OF EVERY SPOT OF COVER, PETER LED HIS PATROL TOWARDS THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN. . .



AT A FAST JOG-TROT, THE COMMANDOS MOVED SWIFTLY ALONG THE SNOW-COVERED COAST ROAD WHICH FORKED INLAND AHEAD OF THEM. SUDDENLY, PETER GAVE A LOW, STARTLED CRY. . .

LOOK! ENEMY TANKS! IF THEY GET LOOSE IN THE TOWN, THE BOYS WILL BE CARVED UP.

BUT WHAT CAN WE DO, CORPORAL . . . WITH RIFLES AND A TOMMY GUN?



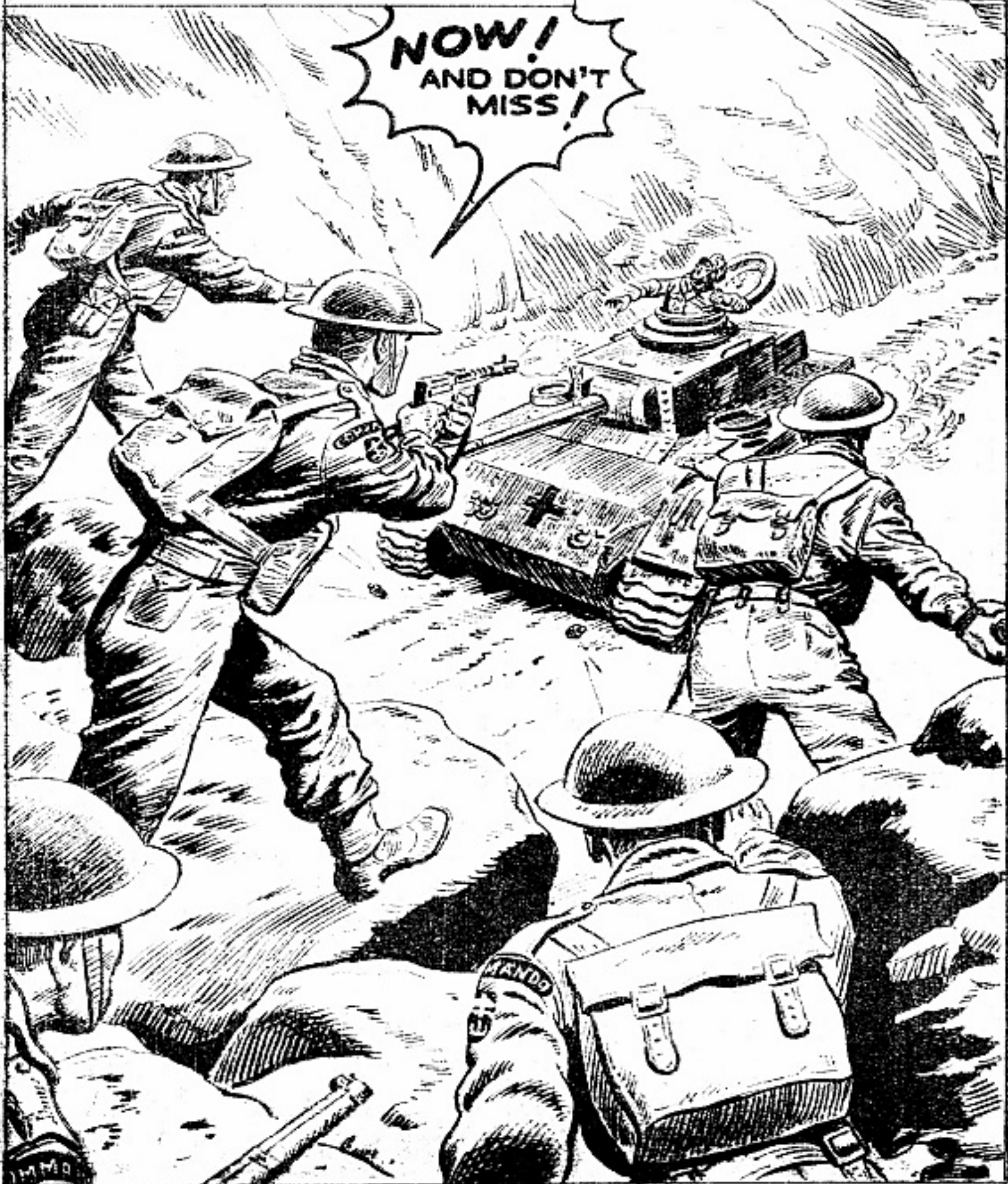
AMONG THE COVER OF ROCKS OVERLOOKING A NARROW DEFILE, PETER HURRIEDLY OUTLINED HIS PLAN. . .

NOW, REMEMBER, THE MOST VULNERABLE POINTS ARE THE TRACKS AND THE DRIVING SPROCKET WHEELS. I WANT EACH OF YOU TO THROW A GRENADE AT THE NEAREST TRACK WHEN I GIVE THE WORD. WITH ANY LUCK THE DISABLED TANK SHOULD BLOCK THE ROAD.



THE LEADING GERMAN TANK CLATTERED CLOSER, THE THUNDER OF ITS ENGINE REVERBERATING FROM THE WALLS OF THE DEFILE. AS ONE MAN, THE COMMANDOS HURLED THEIR GRENADES...

**NOW!
AND DON'T
MISS!**



THE ATTACK WAS SUDDEN AND DEVASTATING. THE CATERPILLAR TRACK OF THE TANK WAS SHATTERED AND TORN OFF BY THE COMBINED FORCE OF THE GRENADES, AND THE ARMoured GIANT SLEWED ROUND ACROSS THE ROAD.



THE COMMANDOS HUDDLED CLOSE TO THE GROUND AS BULLETS FROM THE SECOND TANK SPANGLED FROM THE ROCKS ABOVE THEIR HEADS.

GIVE ME THE EXPLOSIVES EACH OF YOU WERE CARRYING FOR THE RADIO STATION... THEY'LL BE MORE USE HERE!



THAT SECOND TANK IS GOING TO GET FED UP WITH SLINGING BULLETS USELESSLY AT THE ROCKS... IT'LL COME OVER TO WINKLE US OUT IN A MINUTE. FOR ABOUT FIVE SECONDS AS IT CLIMBS THAT BANK BESIDE THE ROAD, ITS GUNNER WILL BE UNSIGHTED... THEN I'M GOING TO MAKE A DASH FOR IT WITH THESE EXPLOSIVES!



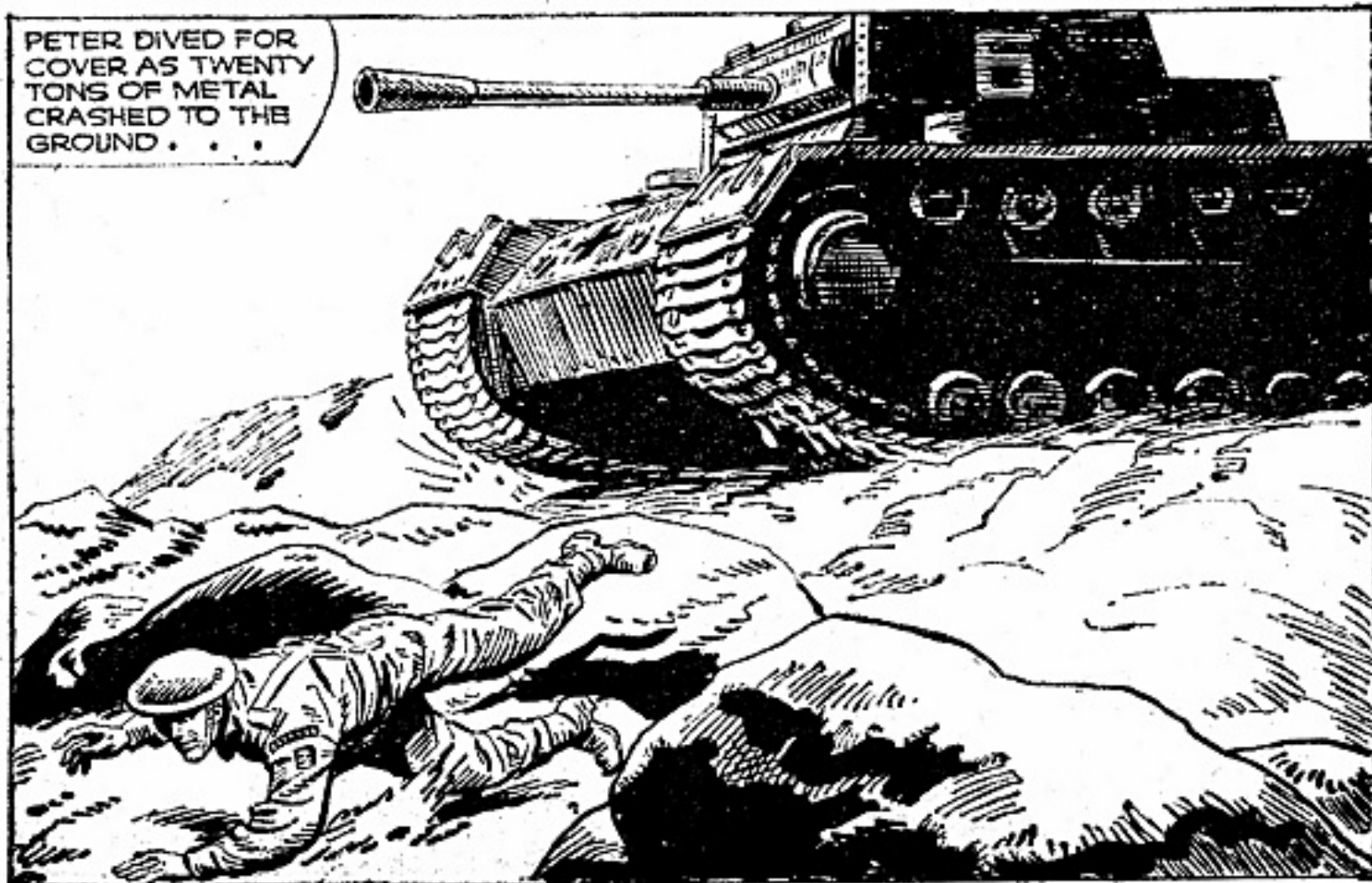
AS THE YOUNG COMMANDO HAD PREDICTED, THE GERMAN TANK COMMANDER QUICKLY DECIDED TO CHANGE HIS TACTICS... AND THEN PETER MOVED LIKE LIGHTNING.



THE GREAT MECHANICAL MONSTER ROSE HIGH ABOVE THE COMMANDO, BLOTTING OUT THE SKY. COOLLY, HE PLACED THE CHARGES ON THE GROUND.



PETER DIVED FOR COVER AS TWENTY TONS OF METAL CRASHED TO THE GROUND...



INSTANTLY A TREMENDOUS,
CRASHING EXPLOSION
RENT THE AIR . . .



HE'S DONE IT!
THAT TANK'S
GOING OVER
BACKWARDS!

THE TANK SMASHED BACK ON TO THE ROADWAY AND LAY THERE LIKE A GIANT TURTLE, QUITE UNABLE TO MOVE.

LET 'EM GO, LADS! THE CRUISER'S SOUNDING THE RECALL ON ITS SIREN... WE'D BETTER GET A MOVE ON BACK TO THE BOATS!

WE CERTAINLY HAD, JERRY'S NOT GOING TO BE VERY PLEASED TO MEET ANY COMMANDOS LEFT HEREABOUTS!



THE ELATED COMMANDOS HURRIED BACK TOWARDS THE HARBOUR . . .

WELL, I RECKON THAT WAS A NICE PIECE OF WORK... TWO ENEMY TANKS DESTROYED AND NOT A SCRATCH ON ANY OF US!



THEY REACHED THE QUAY AND FOUND MAJOR BANKS, THEIR COMPANY COMMANDER, IMPATIENTLY STAMPING UP AND DOWN . . .

WHERE THE DEVIL HAVE YOU BEEN, CORPORAL? THE FORCE COMMANDER DOESN'T LIKE TO BE KEPT WAITING. DID YOU COMPLETE YOUR TASK?

NO, SIR, YOU SEE...

WHAT? THEN THAT WIRELESS STATION HAS BEEN ON THE AIR DURING THE WHOLE OPERATION. GET ABOARD THE LANDING CRAFT... I MUST REPORT THIS AT ONCE!



THE WHOLE SCENE HAD BEEN CLOSELY FOLLOWED FROM THE BRIDGE OF THE CRUISER WAITING OFF SHORE . . . WHERE LIEUTENANT COMMANDER DONALD CONRAD HAD BEEN WATCHING THROUGH A TELESCOPE . . .



LAST LANDING CRAFT LEAVING NOW, SIR!

GREAT SCOTT! THAT WAS YOUNG PETER WHO WAS KEEPING US WAITING!

THANK YOU, COMMANDER CONRAD!

INWARDLY FUMING AT THE ADMISSION OF FAILURE, MAJOR BANKS MADE HIS REPORT AS THE LANDING CRAFT CAME CLOSE ALONGSIDE THE CRUISER.

VERY WELL, MAJOR . . . CARRY ON TO YOUR SHIP!

PLEASE INFORM THE FORCE COMMANDER THAT MY PATROL FAILED TO DESTROY THE WIRELESS STATION, SIR!

SO PETER MADE A HASH OF IT!



Chapter 3. LONG JOURNEY HOME

THE SLEEK CRUISER SLID EFFORTLESSLY AHEAD LEAVING THE TINY, FLAT-BOTTOMED CRAFT TO CREEP ALONG IN ITS WAKE. THERE WAS A BLEAK UNHAPPY LOOK ON PETER CONRAD'S FACE AS HE WATCHED THE GREAT TURRETS OF THE WARSHIP SWING MENACINGLY TOWARDS THE LAND... AND THE GUNS THUNDER RESOUNDINGLY INTO LIFE. HE HAD RECOGNISED HIS BROTHER ON THE BRIDGE.



AS THE SHELLS FROM THE WARSHIP REDUCED THE GERMAN WIRELESS STATION TO A CRUMBLING RUIN, THE MEN IN THE LANDING CRAFT WERE ALARMED TO SEE FOUR SPOUTS OF WATER RISE FROM THE SEA CLOSE TO THEM.



THAT QUESTION WAS BEING DECIDED ABOARD THE INFANTRY LANDING SHIP AT THAT VERY MOMENT, FOR LOOKOUTS HAD REPORTED THAT THE ENEMY WERE APPROACHING IN SOME STRENGTH.

A CRUISER AND TWO DESTROYERS! H'MMM! WE MUST SAIL AT ONCE, I'M AFRAID — WE CAN'T WAIT FOR THE LAST L.C.A. IF OUR ESCORT CAN DELAY THE ENEMY A WHILE WE MAY BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM THE SLIP. FULL AHEAD, NUMBER ONE, AND HEAVEN HELP THOSE WE LEAVE BEHIND!

AYE,
AYE, SIR!

ALTHOUGH THE BRITISH CRUISER WAS WHEELING TO MEET THE ENEMY, SHELLS WERE STILL FALLING AROUND THE LANDING CRAFT. THEN ONE EXPLODED CLOSE ALONGSIDE, AND JAGGED STEEL SPLINTERS CUT DOWN THOSE BESIDE THE WHEEL.



WITH NO HAND AT THE HELM, THE BOAT WAS AT THE MERCY OF THE SEAS. IT YAWED DANGEROUSLY, AND A WAVE CRASHED OVER THE SIDE. PETER CONRAD SIZED UP THE DESPERATE SITUATION IN A FLASH. . .

I MUST REACH THAT WHEEL, OR WE'LL FOUNDER IN THESE SEAS!

HIS STRONG HANDS GRIPPED THE WHEEL, AND HE SWUNG THE LANDING CRAFT'S BOWS HEAD-ON INTO THE SEAS.

BILL, BRING ANOTHER MAN UP HERE AND SEE HOW BADLY WOUNDED MAJOR BANKS AND THESE SAILORS ARE. IF THERE'S ANYONE WHO KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT DIESEL ENGINES, GET DOWN INTO THE ENGINE ROOM AND LOOK THEM OVER. CHECK IF THERE'S ANY SPARE FUEL!

OKAY, PETE!

LEAVE IT TO ME, CORPORAL!

DISASTER FACED THAT SMALL BAND OF COMMANDOS. THEIR SHIP WAS STEAMING AWAY FROM THEM AT FULL SPEED. . . GERMAN WARSHIPS WERE CLOSE AT THEIR HEELS. . . AND, ASHORE, A VENGEFUL ENEMY WOULD SHOW THEM SCANT MERCY. THEIR OFFICER AND THE NAVAL PERSONNEL OUT OF ACTION; THEY TURNED TO THE ONE MAN WHO STILL SEEMED CONFIDENT - LANCE CORPORAL PETER CONRAD.

ALL THREE ARE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, PETE. WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN FOR THEM.

ENGINES ARE OKAY, CORPORAL - AND THERE ARE FOUR SPARE DRUMS OF DIESEL OIL.

RIGHT, LISTEN, LADS...

PETER RAISED HIS VOICE TO A SHOUT . . .

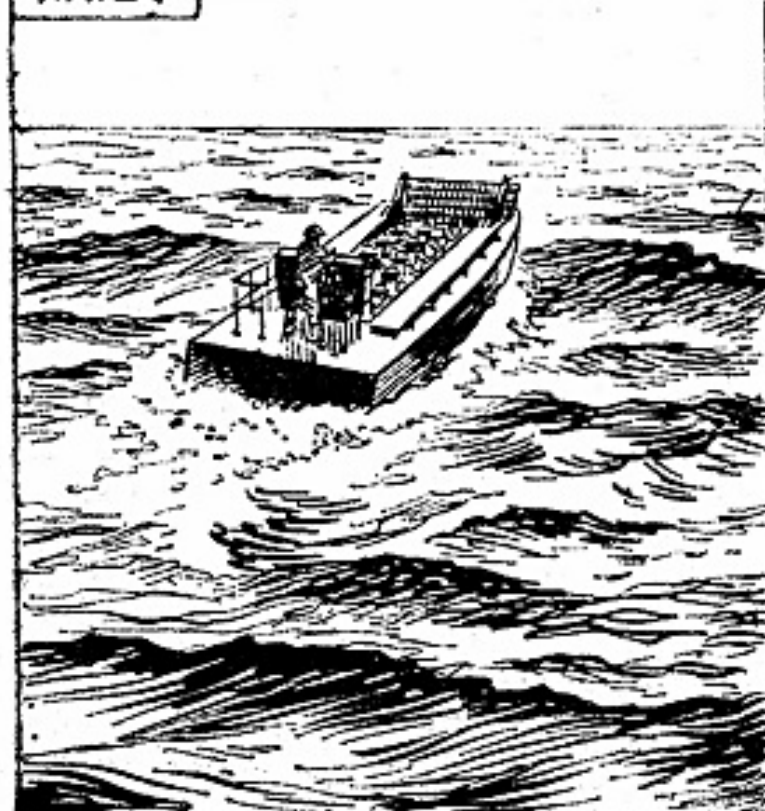
YOU ALL KNOW THE FIX WE'RE IN. IF WE STAY HERE, WE'VE HAD IT! I PROPOSE TO STEER FOR ENGLAND. IT'S A LONG TRIP, BUT WE STAND A GOOD CHANCE OF BEING PICKED UP ON THE WAY. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE A PICNIC SO SETTLE DOWN... YOU'LL ALL BE DEEP SEA SAILORS BY THE TIME WE GET THERE. OKAY?

OKAY BY US, CORPORAL!

AYE, TAKE US HOME... IT'S TOO FLIPPIN' COLD HERE!



THE SOUNDS OF THE SEA BATTLE FADED BEHIND THEM, AS THE LANDING CRAFT HEADED WEST, RISING AND FALLING WITH EVERY WAVE.



AT FIRST, THE CHEERFUL VOICES OF THE COMMANDOS SOUNDED ABOVE THE THUNDER OF THE WAVES, BUT SOON THE MEN FELL SILENT AS THEY STROVE TO FIND SHELTER FROM THE SEAS THAT CRASHED OVER THEM.

RIGHT DOWN MY PERISHIN' NECK!

YOU SHOULD WORRY— I'M SOAKED TO THE SKIN!



SLOWLY BUT STEADILY, FOR HOUR AFTER HOUR, THE LANDING CRAFT PLOUGHED INTO THE NORTH SEA, TOSSED ABOUT LIKE A MATCH BOX IN A TORRENT, ONLY THE HANDS OF A SEAMAN COULD KEEP THAT FLIMSY CRAFT AFLOAT. . . AND PETER CONRAD DID JUST THAT!



INTO THE DARK REACHES OF THE NIGHT, PETER NEVER MOVED MORE THAN A FEW FEET FROM THE WHEEL. . .

KEEP A SHARP LOOK-OUT, YOU LADS IN THE BOWS. WE'RE NOT FAR OFF SCOTLAND NOW, AND THERE COULD BE SOME OF OUR SHIPS ABOUT.



FOR ANOTHER HOUR THEY PLUNGED ONWARDS, BUFFETED BY EVERY WAVE, THEN, SUDDENLY, THERE CAME A FRANTIC CRY FORWARD. . .

LOOK OUT! A SHIP!

HARD A PORT, BILL! QUICK!



IN THE NICK OF TIME, THE LANDING CRAFT SLEWED SIDeways, SLIPPED DOWN INTO THE TROUGH OF A WAVE AND GRATED HARSHLY ALONGSIDE THE DARK BULK OF A SHIP.



A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE ASTONISHED CREW OF ONE OF H.M. MINELAYERS HELPED THIRTY OR MORE DRENCHED AND FROZEN SOLDIERS OVER THE SIDE OF THEIR SHIP.



HIS ORDEAL OVER, LANCE-CORPORAL PETER CONRAD WENT FORWARD TO WHERE MAJOR BANKS HAD BEEN ATTENDED BY THE SHIP'S MEDICAL ORDERLY.

GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE OKAY, SIR!

CORPORAL CONRAD, I'VE NOW BEEN TOLD ABOUT YOUR ACTION BACK IN NORWAY WHEN YOU ATTACKED AND DESTROYED TWO ENEMY TANKS. I'M AFRAID I WRONGED YOU! I SHALL MAKE A FULL REPORT OF YOUR GALLANTRY THERE AND OF THE FINE PIECE OF SEAMANSHIP IN SAILING THE LANDING CRAFT SO FAR TOWARDS HOME. WELL DONE, CORPORAL!



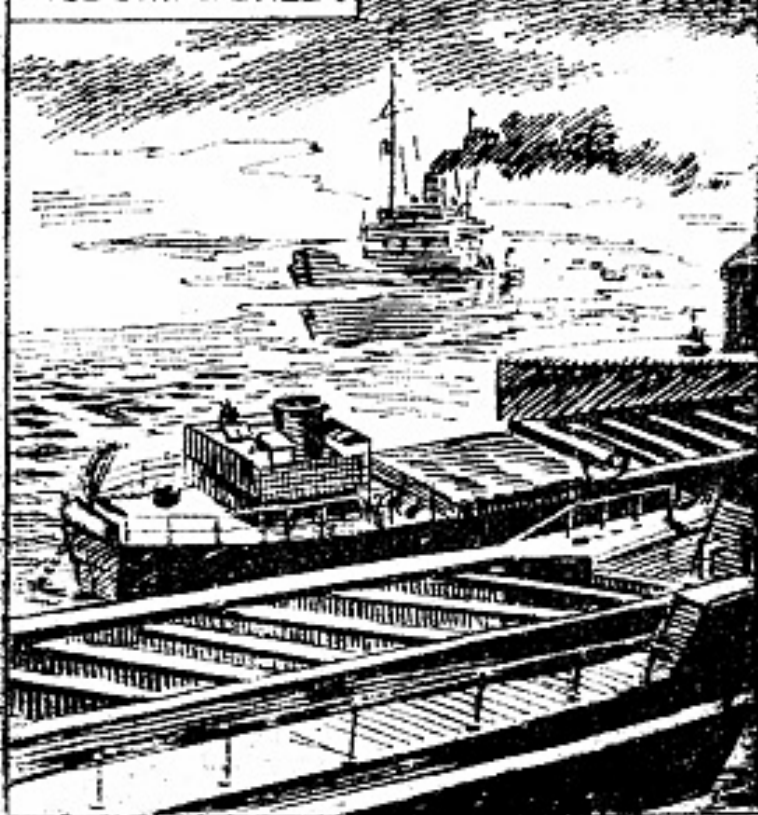
PETER TURNED TOWARDS THE DOOR, AND MAJOR BANKS CALLED AFTER HIM.

BY THE WAY, CORPORAL, THE CAPTAIN OF THIS MINE-LAYER HAS INTERCEPTED A MESSAGE THAT THE CRUISER WE LEFT BEHIND SANK TWO OF THE ENEMY AND IS HEADING FOR PORT.

THANK YOU, SIR, FOR THAT NEWS. MY BROTHER IS SERVING ABOARD HER!



THE RAYS OF A CHILL, MISTY DAWN OUTLINING ITS GREY HULL, THE MINELAYING TRAWLER SLIPPED QUIETLY INTO A NORTHERN PORT — HER DANGEROUS NIGHT MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.



AS PETER FOLLOWED HIS FRIEND, BILL WITHERS, ASHORE, HE POINTED TO THE LARGE LANDING CRAFT MOORED FARTHER ALONG THE QUAY.

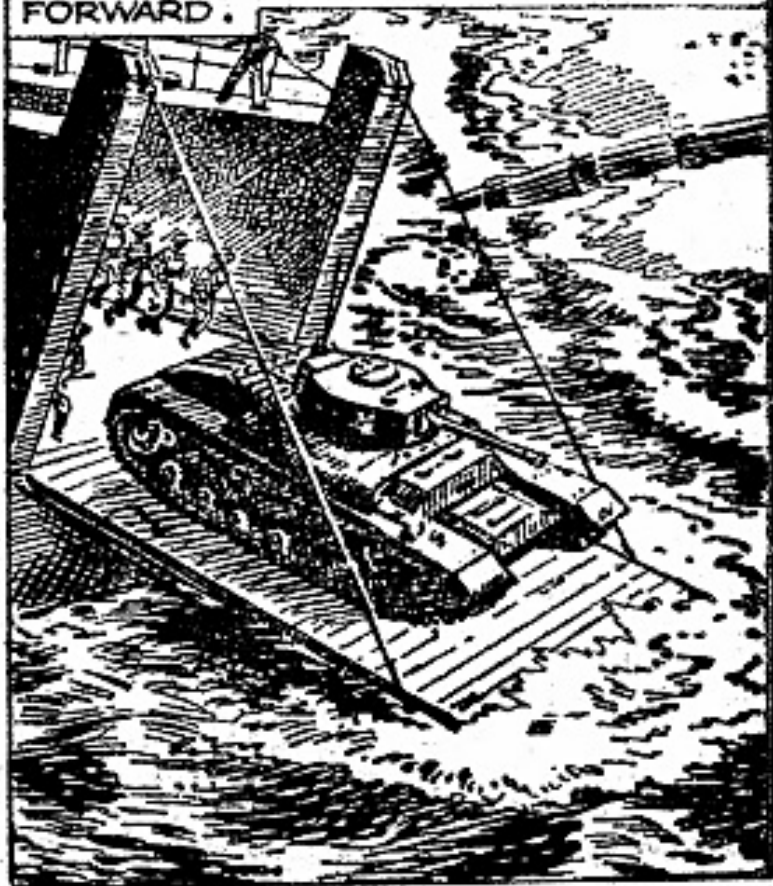
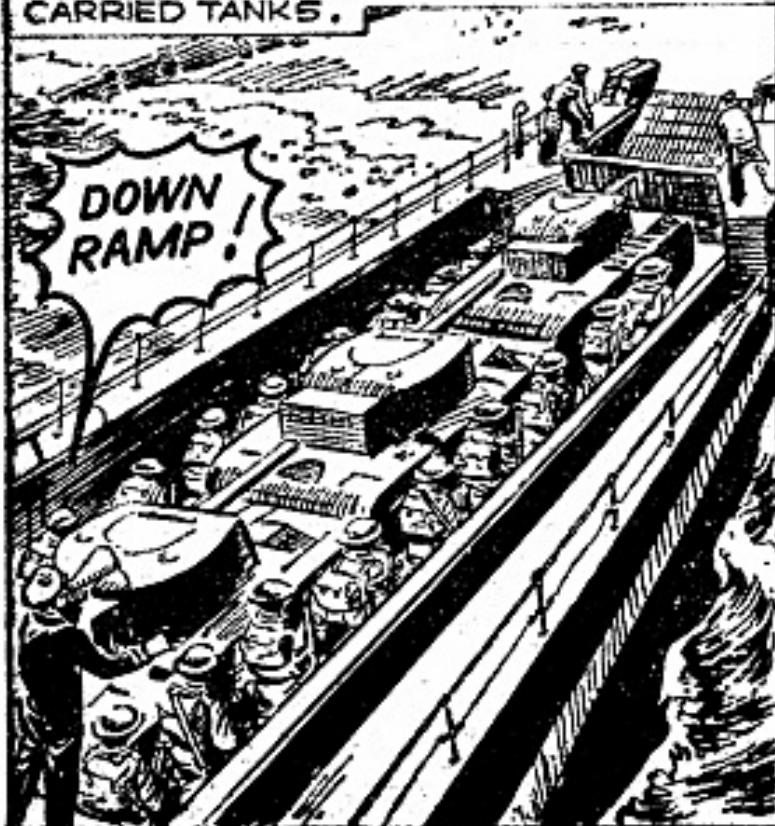
HEY, LOOK AT THOSE, BILL! THEY'RE THE REAL THING - I RECKON THEY'LL BE LANDING TANKS FROM THOSE!

MORE TRAINING FOR US, I SUPPOSE... ONE PRACTICE LANDING AFTER ANOTHER UNTIL WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER WE'RE SOLDIERS OR SAILORS!

AND SO IT PROVED! THE COMMANDOS SOON BECAME FAMILIAR WITH THE VARIOUS NEW TYPES OF LANDING CRAFT, INCLUDING THOSE WHICH CARRIED TANKS.

THE GREAT STEEL RAMP WENT DOWN AND THE FIRST TANK CLATTERED FORWARD.

DOWN RAMP!



FREE OF THE RAMP, IT MOVED STEADILY TOWARDS THE BEACH IN A FOOT OF WATER. THEN THE ONLOOKERS WERE HORRIFIED TO SEE IT PLUNGE DOWNWARDS AS IF SWALLOWED BY THE SEA.

GREAT
HEAVENS!
IT'S FALLEN
INTO DEEP
WATER!



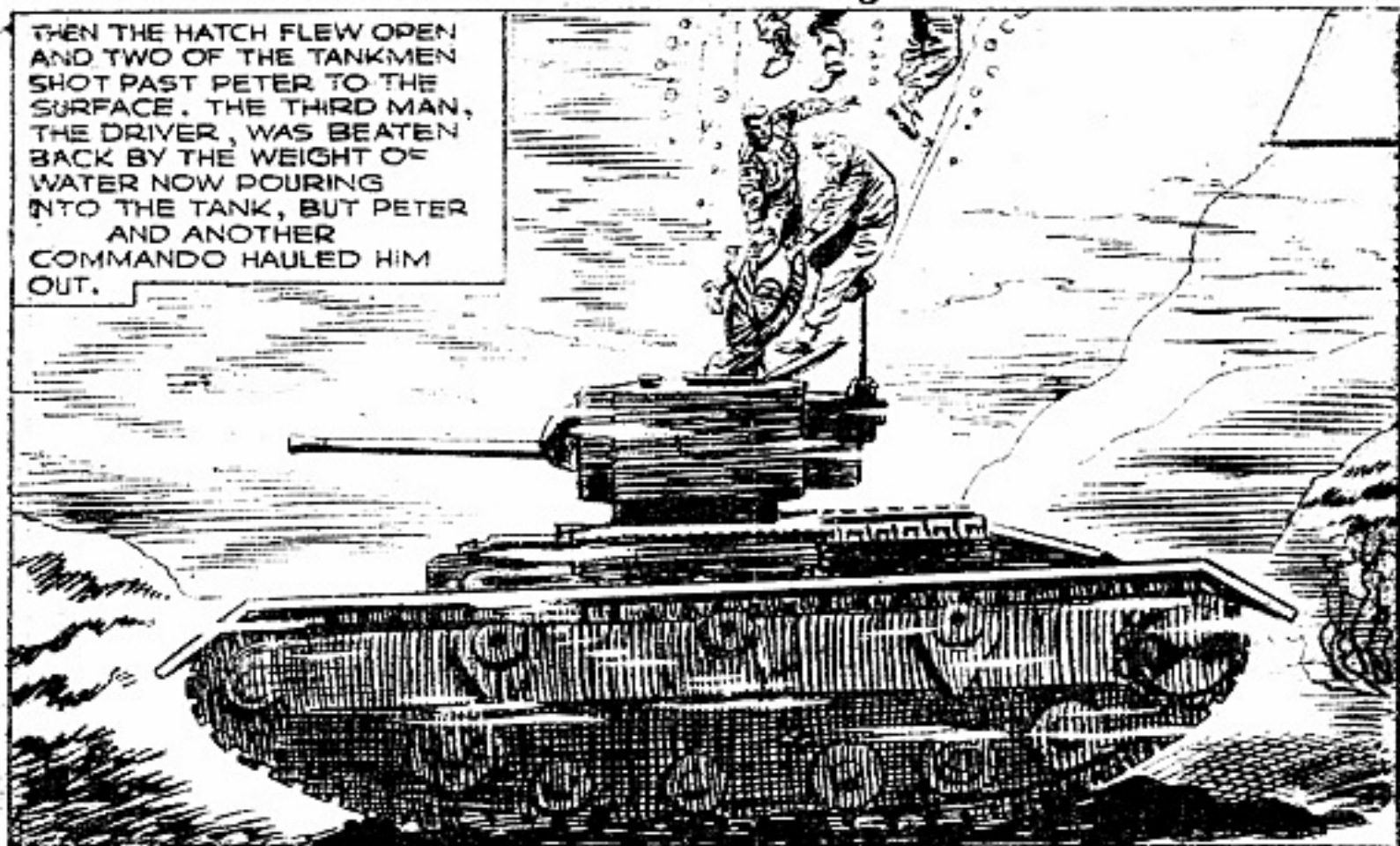
PETER CONRAD, NOW A FULL CORPORAL, WAS FOREMOST IN THE RUSH TO THE AID OF THE TRAPPED TANK CREW. GRABBING A CROWBAR, HE LEAPT INTO THE WATER WHERE THE TANK DISAPPEARED.



THE HATCH COVER IN THE TOP OF THE TURRET MUST HAVE BEEN JARRED OUT OF POSITION IN THE FALL, FOR THE MEN INSIDE THE TANK WERE FIGHTING DESPERATELY, BUT IN VAIN, TO OPEN IT. BREATH HELD, PETER PUT ALL HIS WEIGHT ON THE IRON BAR...



THEN THE HATCH FLEW OPEN AND TWO OF THE TANKMEN SHOT PAST PETER TO THE SURFACE. THE THIRD MAN, THE DRIVER, WAS BEATEN BACK BY THE WEIGHT OF WATER NOW POURING INTO THE TANK, BUT PETER AND ANOTHER COMMANDO HAULED HIM OUT.




BADLY SHAKEN BY THE NEAR-FATAL ACCIDENT, TWO OFFICERS WATCHED THE TANK CREW AND THEIR RESCUERS BEING HELPED ABOARD THE LANDING CRAFT.

A SOUNDING WAS TAKEN AS THE CRAFT BEACHED, SIR, AND IT SEEMED SAFE TO DISEMBARK. SHE MUST HAVE GROUND ON A SAND BAR!

THESE BEACHES MUST BE EXAMINED THOROUGHLY BEFORE WE CONTINUE WITH THESE LANDINGS, I'M AFRAID. IF THIS WERE THE REAL THING, IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS. ONLY THANKS TO THE QUICK ACTION OF CORPORAL CONRAD HAS A TRAGEDY BEEN AVERTED HERE.




IT SOON BECAME OBVIOUS AS THE TRAINING PROGRESSED THAT EVERY DETAIL MUST BE KNOWN OF THE BEACH ON WHICH A LANDING WAS TO BE MADE. THIS POSED A PROBLEM WHEN THOSE VERY BEACHES WERE HELD BY AN ALERT ENEMY. TWO MONTHS LATER, CORPORAL PETER CONRAD WAS SUMMONED TO HIS COMMANDING OFFICER'S OFFICE.



CORPORAL CONRAD, I'VE RECEIVED A REQUEST FROM COMBINED OPS FOR MEN SUITABLE FOR A SPECIAL UNIT NOW BEING FORMED. IT IS CALLED COMBINED OPERATIONS RECONNAISSANCE AND PILOTAGE PARTY. THEIR JOB IS TO RECCE AND TAKE SOUNDINGS ON ENEMY BEACHES PRIOR TO INVASION LANDINGS THERE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER?

YES, SIR!
IT SOUNDS
AS IF IT
MIGHT BE
INTERESTING.

THERE WAS A HINT OF REGRET IN MAJOR BANKS' VOICE AS HE CONTINUED. . .



I SHALL BE SORRY TO LOSE YOU, CORPORAL. YOU'VE DONE SOME EXCELLENT WORK SINCE YOU JOINED US. BUT I THINK YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE SEA, PLUS YOUR COMMANDO TRAINING WILL MAKE YOU AN IDEAL RECRUIT FOR THIS NEW UNIT. BE A CREDIT TO THE COMMANDOS. . . AND GOOD LUCK GO WITH YOU!

THANK
YOU, SIR!

Chapter 4. THE HOSTILE SHORE

THE CAMP OF PETER'S NEW UNIT WAS ALSO CLOSE TO THE SEA, BUT THIS TIME IN NORTHERN ENGLAND. HE ARRIVED THERE TO FIND IT A STRANGE MIXTURE OF ARMY AND NAVAL PERSONNEL.

CORPORAL CONRAD REPORTING, CHIEF! I'VE JUST BEEN POSTED HERE.

CONRAD, EH? THAT'S STRANGE! WAIT HERE, I'LL SEE IF THE COMMANDING OFFICER CAN SEE YOU!

THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER WENT THROUGH A DOORWAY NEARBY, AND A MOMENT LATER, REAPPEARED AND BECKONED PETER IN.

WELL, I'LL BE JIGGERED...
DON!

HAVE THEY SLUNG YOU OUT OF THE COMMANDOS AT LAST, PETER? WE DON'T WANT THE ARMY'S CAST-OFFS... THERE CAN BE NO FAILURE IN THIS JOB. THE FATE OF THOUSANDS DEPENDS UPON EVERY MAN!

HIS BROTHER'S HARSH WORDS WERE LIKE A SLAP IN THE FACE TO PETER, AND HE FLUSHED ANGRILY.

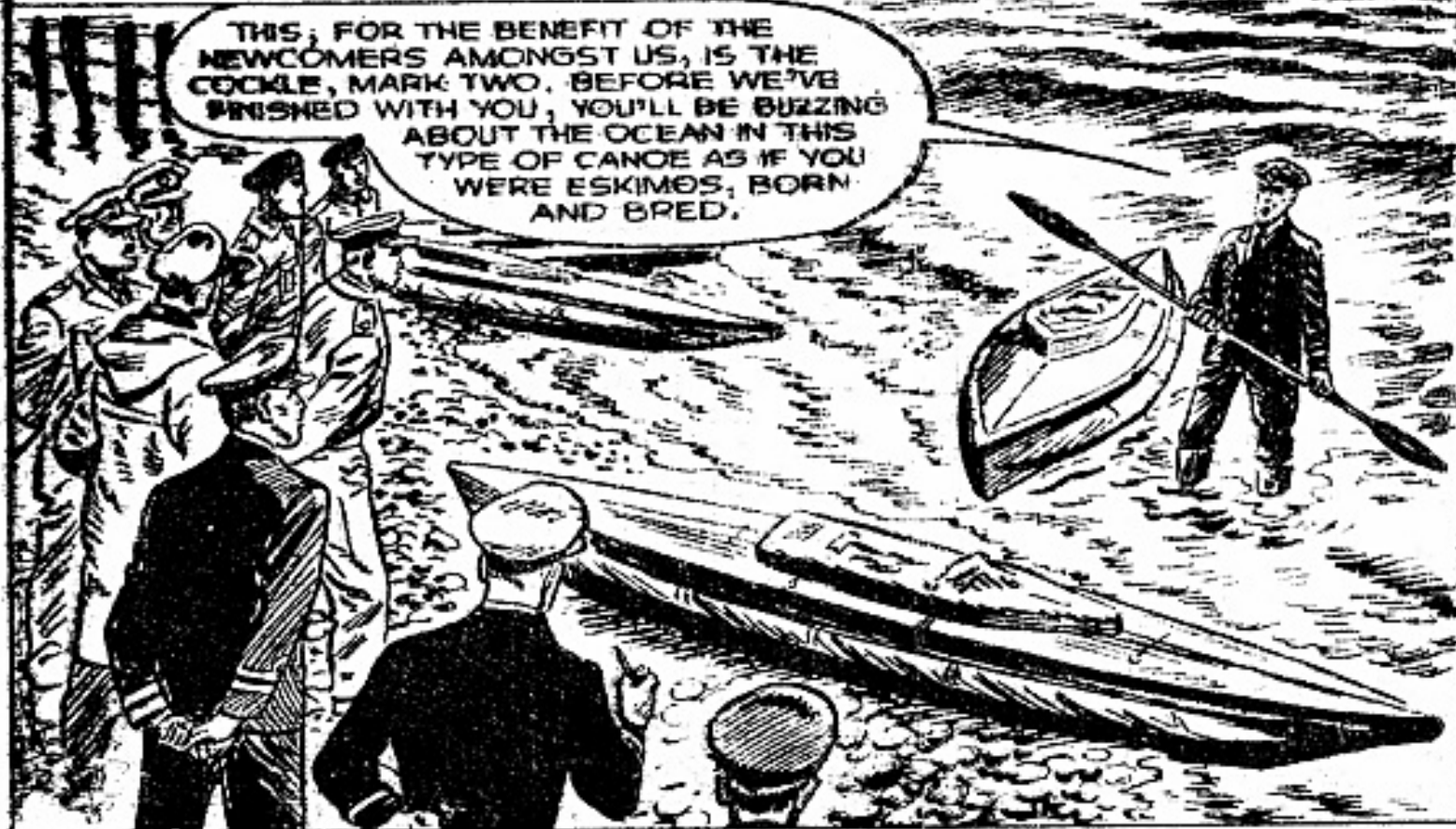
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO SAY THAT, DON, GOLD BRAID OR NO GOLD BRAID! YOU AND DAD TREAT ME LIKE A TRAITOR—JUST BECAUSE I JOINED THE ARMY INSTEAD OF THE NAVY. ONE DAY I'LL SHOW YOU HOW WRONG YOU BOTH ARE!

YOU NEARLY BROKE DAD'S HEART WHEN YOU JOINED THE ARMY, AND I DON'T FIND THAT EASY TO FORGIVE. THE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER WILL SHOW YOU WHERE TO BUNK DOWN... YOU'LL JOIN US IN THE TRAINING TOMORROW!

COMMANDO

NEXT DAY, PETER CONRAD BEGAN AN ENTIRELY NEW KIND OF TRAINING.

THIS, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NEWCOMERS AMONGST US, IS THE COCKLE, MARK TWO. BEFORE WE'VE FINISHED WITH YOU, YOU'LL BE BUZZING ABOUT THE OCEAN IN THIS TYPE OF CANOE AS IF YOU WERE ESKIMOS, BORN AND BRED.



AND INDEED, THE OFFICERS, RATINGS AND OTHER RANKS OF C.O.P.P. (WHICH WAS THE ABBREVIATION OF THE UNIT'S TITLE) SOON BECAME PROFICIENT IN HANDLING AND NAVIGATING THEIR FRAIL CRAFT IN ANY KIND OF SEA, IN DAYLIGHT OR AT NIGHT.

GOOD APPROACH! NOW KEEP HER STERN STRAIGHT AND LEVEL, NUMBER TWO, OR YOU'LL BOTH BE FOR A DOUSING!



SEVERAL SUCCESSFUL BUT MINOR RECONNAISSANCES WERE CARRIED OUT BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER CONRAD'S PILOTAGE PARTY ON THE ENEMY-HELD COAST OF EUROPE. THEN THEY DREW TROPICAL KIT AND EMBARKED ON A TROOPSHIP BOUND FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN.

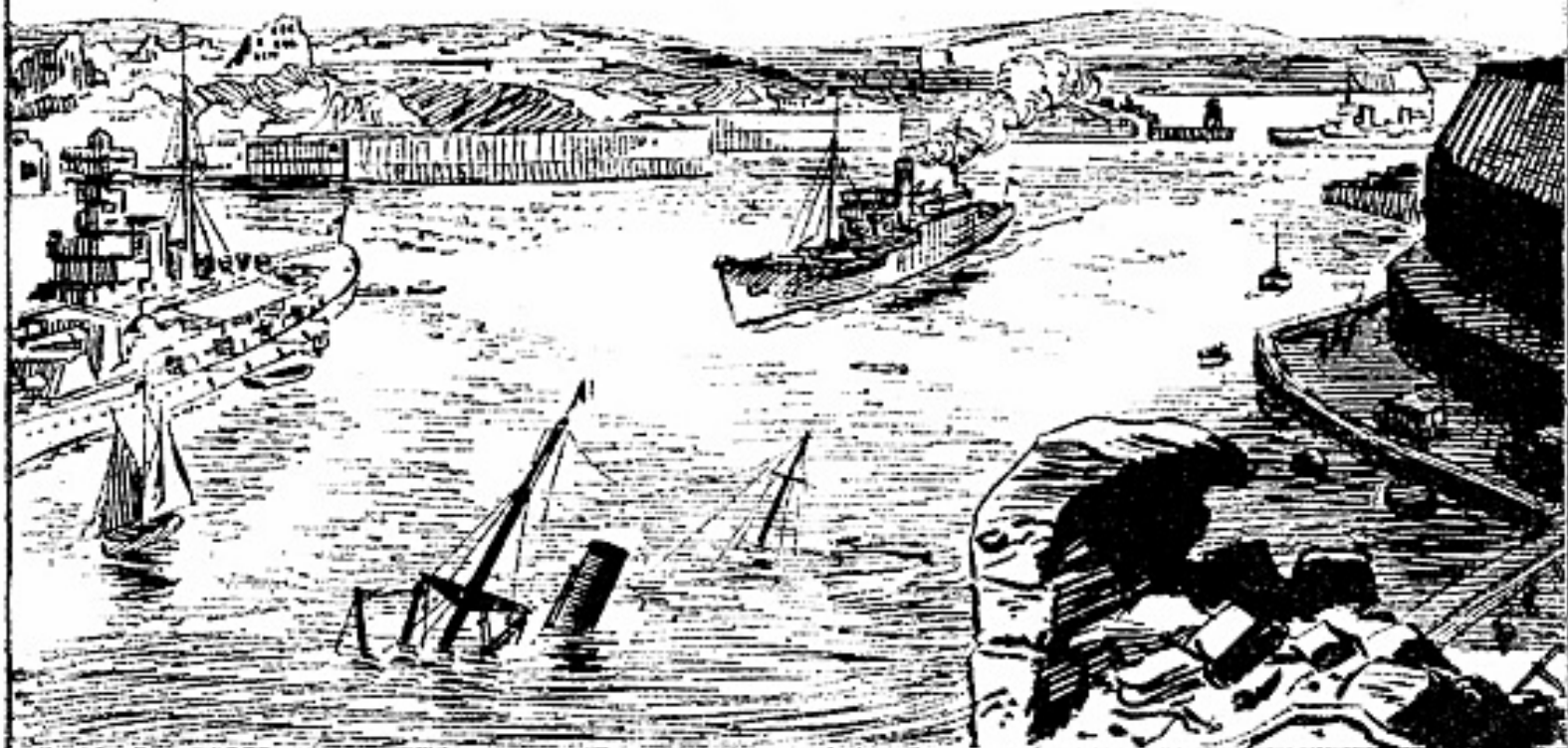
SOMEONE WAS TELLING ME TODAY, PETE, THAT COMMANDER CONRAD IS YOUR BROTHER. I WOULDN'T BELIEVE HIM. THE COMMANDER NEVER SEEMS TO NOTICE YOU, LET ALONE SPEAK TO YOU

YES, WE'RE BROTHERS, JERRY! BUT WE'VE GOT A BIT OF A FAMILY MISUNDERSTANDING GOING ON SO . . .



AND PETER SHRUGGED EXPRESSIVELY.


DURING THOSE THREE WEEKS AT SEA, NOT ONE FRIENDLY WORD PASSED BETWEEN THE NAVAL OFFICER AND HIS BROTHER, PETER, WHO WAS RELIEVED WHEN AT LAST THE WHITE WALLS OF MALTA'S BATTERED HARBOUR CAME INTO SIGHT.



THERE WAS AN AIR OF URGENCY IN THE GALLANT LITTLE ISLAND. THE BATTLE HAD NEVER CEASED FOR MALTA, AND NOW POWERFUL ALLIED FORCES WERE POISED FOR THE SPRING FROM CONQUERED NORTH AFRICA INTO EUROPE. DONALD CONRAD SOON RECEIVED HIS ORDERS.

TOMORROW WE BEGIN A DETAILED RECONNAISSANCE OF THE BEACHES OF SOUTHERN SICILY. TIME IS SHORT, THE ENEMY'S DEFENCES ARE ALERT, HOURLY EXPECTING TO BE ATTACKED... IN FACT, WE'VE GOT A MIGHTY TOUGH JOB AHEAD OF US. THERE CAN BE NO MISTAKE! NOT ONLY WILL THE MAN WHO MAKES IT HAVE PREJUDICED THE WHOLE INVASION — HE WILL BE DEAD!





DETAILED OPERATION ORDERS ARE READY FOR ALL DETACHMENT COMMANDERS. I SHALL BE GOING MYSELF WITH LIEUTENANT WADE IN THE SUBMARINE *STARFISH*. CORPORAL CONRAD WILL ACT AS CANOE HANDLER FOR US. DON'T FORGET... BE SILENT, BE SURE... REMAIN ALERT, AND YOU WILL LIVE TO TELL THE TALE! GOOD LUCK, ALL OF YOU!

THAT AFTERNOON, PETER SUPERINTENDED THE LOADING OF THE ALL-IMPORTANT CANOE THROUGH THE TORPEDO HATCH ON THE SUBMARINE'S DECK.



STEADY SHE GOES, BOYS, OR I SHALL NEED MY PUNCTURE OUTFIT EVEN BEFORE WE START!

THERE WERE SIXTY PERILOUS MILES OF SEA BETWEEN MALTA AND THE COAST OF SICILY—SEA PATROLLED BY ENEMY AIRCRAFT AND WARSHIPS.

SHIP ON THE PORT BOW, SIR, BEARING O-FOUR-FIVE!



NEXT MOMENT, THE STRIDENT BLARE OF THE KLAXON HORN SENT THE SUBMARINE'S CREW DARTING TO 'ACTION STATIONS' AND AS THE CONNING TOWER HATCH SLAMMED SHUT, STARFISH SLID BENEATH THE WAVES.

TAKE HER TO EIGHTY FEET, NUMBER ONE—THEN STOP ENGINES. IT'S A JERRY ANTI-SUB PATROL BOAT... THEY MUST HAVE PICKED US UP ON THEIR RADAR.

AYE, AYE, SIR!



FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE, STARFISH FLOATED AS SILENTLY AS ANY DENIZEN OF THE DEEP. THEN CAME THE DEPTH CHARGES... BATTERING AT HER HULL LIKE GIANT HAMMERS...



FOR HOUR AFTER HOUR, THE SUBMARINE'S REMORSELESS HUNTERS KEPT UP THE ATTACK, BUT SHE SURVIVED.

THIS DELAY COMPLICATES MATTERS FOR OUR MISSION. NOW WE HAVE ONLY ONE NIGHT IN WHICH TO COMPLETE OUR RECONNAISSANCE. THE SUBMARINE IS SCHEDULED TO MEET THE INVASION FLEET WITH OUR LATEST INFORMATION THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.

SHOULD THE SEAS BE RUNNING HIGH, IT'S GOING TO BE TRICKY LAUNCHING THAT CANOE...



THE NEXT EVENING THE MOON WAS BIG AND BRIGHT — A HUNTER'S MOON — BUT H.M.S. STARFISH WAS THE QUARRY NOT THE HUNTER!

IT'S AS BRIGHT AS DAY OUT THERE, COMMANDER... WE DAREN'T SURFACE UNTIL THE MOON GOES DOWN.

I AGREE — BUT IT'S GOING TO LEAVE US PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME.



NOT UNTIL AFTER MIDNIGHT WAS H.M.S. STARFISH ABLE TO SURFACE. HALF A GALE SENT THE WHITE-CAPPED WAVES CRASHING OVER THE SMOOTH STEEL HULL AS PETER LOWERED THE CANOE INTO THE SEA. ALL WAS READY.

CANOE LAUNCHED, SIR!

RIGHT, CORPORAL — YOU GO FIRST, WADE.



LIEUTENANT WADE GINGERLY SLID DOWN THE ROUNDED CASING, GROPED FOR THE CANOE WITH ONE LEG, AND AT THAT MOMENT WAS STRUCK BY A WAVE. CAUGHT OFF BALANCE, HE FELL HEAVILY.



A QUICK INSPECTION SHOWED THAT WADE HAD BROKEN HIS LEG - ILL LUCK SEEMED TO BE DOGGING THE MISSION. LIEUTENANT COMMANDER CONRAD SWUNG ROUND ON HIS BROTHER. . .



PETER'S ASSENT WAS QUIET BUT UNHESITATING, AND AS HE GAVE IT, THE THOUGHT FLASHED THROUGH HIS MIND THAT THIS COULD BE HIS CHANCE TO PROVE HIMSELF TO HIS OLDER BROTHER.

WE'LL BE BACK AT THIS RENDEZVOUS AT O-THREE-HUNDRED HOURS. TILL THEN . . .

WE'LL BE HEREABOUTS, SIR, NEVER FEAR. GOOD LUCK.



WITH DEFT STROKES OF THEIR PADDLES, THE TWO MEN SENT THE CANOE CLEAVING THROUGH THE WAVES . . . TOWARDS THE HOSTILE SHORE . . .



A HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE DARK SOLIDITY OF LAND, THEY HELD THE CANOE MOTIONLESS AGAINST THE TIDE . . .

I'LL ANCHOR THE OTHER END OF THE LINE AT THE WATER'S EDGE AND TAKE SOUNDINGS BACK TO THE CANOE. KEEP IT TAUT SO THAT I CAN MEASURE OFF THE DISTANCES CORRECTLY.



RIGHT!


ALL WAS QUIET SAVE FOR THE SWISH OF THE WAVES ON THE BEACH AND THE OCCASIONAL DISTANT CRY OF A NIGHT BIRD OVER THE LAND. THEN, HIGH ON THE BLACK CLIFFS A LIGHT SHOWED AS A DOOR OPENED AND PETER HEARD THE SOUND OF HARSH VOICES.

GERMANS!
HAS DON
BEEN SEEN?

A black and white illustration of a man in a beanie and jacket sitting in a small wooden canoe. He is looking towards a dark, steep cliff. At the top of the cliff, a small light is visible. The water is choppy with small waves.

BUT NO SHOTS CAME AND SOON THE LIGHT WAS BLACKED OUT. PETER RELAXED AND NEXT MOMENT HIS BROTHER WAS TREADING WATER BESIDE THE CANOE.


TAKE THE CANOE
TWENTY YARDS TO YOUR
LEFT, PETER, AND WE'LL
START AGAIN. WE NEED
AT LEAST SIX DIFFERENT
LINES OF SOUNDINGS.

A black and white illustration showing two men in a canoe. The man on the left is wearing a beanie and a jacket, and is speaking into a microphone. The man on the right is also wearing a beanie and a jacket, and is looking towards the first man. The background shows a dark, rocky shoreline.

BY THE TIME THAT TASK WAS ACCOMPLISHED, ONLY ONE HOUR REMAINED IN WHICH TO EXAMINE THE LAND IMMEDIATELY BEYOND THE BEACH.

WE'LL BOTH HAVE TO GO ASHORE AND SCOUT THE LAND. I'LL LEAVE THE RECORD OF THE SOUNDINGS IN THE CANOE IN CASE OF TROUBLE. REMEMBER, PETER, THEY **MUST** REACH THE SUB AT THE ARRANGED TIME.

YOU CAN RELY ON ME, DON,
THOUGH YOU MAY NOT THINK
SO.

A large black and white illustration showing two men in a canoe navigating through a narrow channel with large rocks. The man on the left is wearing a beanie and a jacket, and is looking towards the right. The man on the right is also wearing a beanie and a jacket, and is looking towards the left. The water is turbulent with large waves and splashes. The background shows a dark, rocky shoreline.

Course For Danger

HAVING CONCEALED THEIR CANOE AMONG THE ROCKS, THEY STEPPED ASHORE, CAREFUL TO KEEP TO THE SHADOWS.

I'LL LOOK OVER THE GROUND BELOW THE CLIFFS AND THE GULLY LEADING OFF THE BEACH. YOU GET TO THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS IF YOU CAN AND GIVE IT A QUICK CHECK OVER. AND, PETER... I'VE GOT A FEELING I CAN RELY ON YOU. BUT BE CAREFUL, OLD SON!

THANKS, DON — AND THE SAME TO YOU!



EVERY SENSE ALERT, THEY CREPT UP THE BEACH AND STEALTHILY WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS. WITHIN THE ALLOTTED TIME, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER CONRAD RETURNED TO THE HIDDEN CANOE, SATISFIED WITH HIS RECONNAISSANCE, BUT PETER WAS NOT THERE. DON WAITED. . .

NOW WHAT THE DEUCE HAS HAPPENED TO HIM? HE CAN'T HAVE BEEN CAUGHT, OR I SHOULD HAVE HEARD SOME COMMOTION!



... AND WAITED! BUT HIS DEPARTURE COULD NOT BE DELAYED ANY LONGER!

HE'S FAILED AGAIN!

IT'S NO GOOD - I CAN'T WAIT. I'VE TWENTY MINUTES' HARD PADDLING TO REACH THE RENDEZVOUS BY MYSELF... AND THEN IT'S TOUCH AND GO WHETHER THE SUB WILL STILL BE WAITING!



ANGRY WITH HIS BROTHER FOR NOT RETURNING IN TIME, YET FEARFUL FOR HIS SAFETY, DONALD CONRAD HEADED THE CANOE SEAWARDS. AFTER A STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TIDE, HE REACHED THE RENDEZVOUS POSITION.

SURELY THEY HAVEN'T LEFT YET!



FOR LONG ANXIOUS SECONDS HE PEERED INTO THE DARKNESS, BUT HIS EARS GAVE HIM THE FIRST INDICATION THAT HIS SIGNAL HAD BEEN SEEN WHEN HE HEARD THE APPROACHING THROB OF THE SUBMARINE'S DIESEL MOTORS.

THANK HEAVENS! I THOUGHT YOU'D GOT TIRED OF WAITING.

WE WERE GOING TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER FIVE MINUTES, SIR... AND THEN, I'M AFRAID, WE WOULD HAVE HAD TO LEAVE!



Chapter 5. CLIFF OF SECRETS

AS DONALD CONRAD REACHED THE FRIENDLY BULK OF THE SUBMARINE, HIS BROTHER, PETER, LAY AS MOTIONLESS AS A FALLEN LOG. HARDLY DARING TO BREATHE... FOR MERE INCHES SEPARATED HIM FROM AN ENEMY PATROL.

WHY THE DEVIL DON'T THOSE JERRIES GET ON WITH THEIR PATROL? DON WILL HAVE GONE WITHOUT ME NOW... AND THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE HERE THAT OUGHT TO BE REPORTED!



AT LAST THE GERMANS SPLIT INTO PAIRS AND MOVED OFF. NOISELESSLY, THE YOUNG COMMANDO CREPT FORWARD A FEW YARDS.

ANOTHER VENTILATOR! THEY'RE SPACED ALL ALONG THE CLIFF TOP. THERE MUST BE AN UNDERGROUND TUNNEL OR SOMETHING LIKE IT BEHIND THE CLIFF FACE!

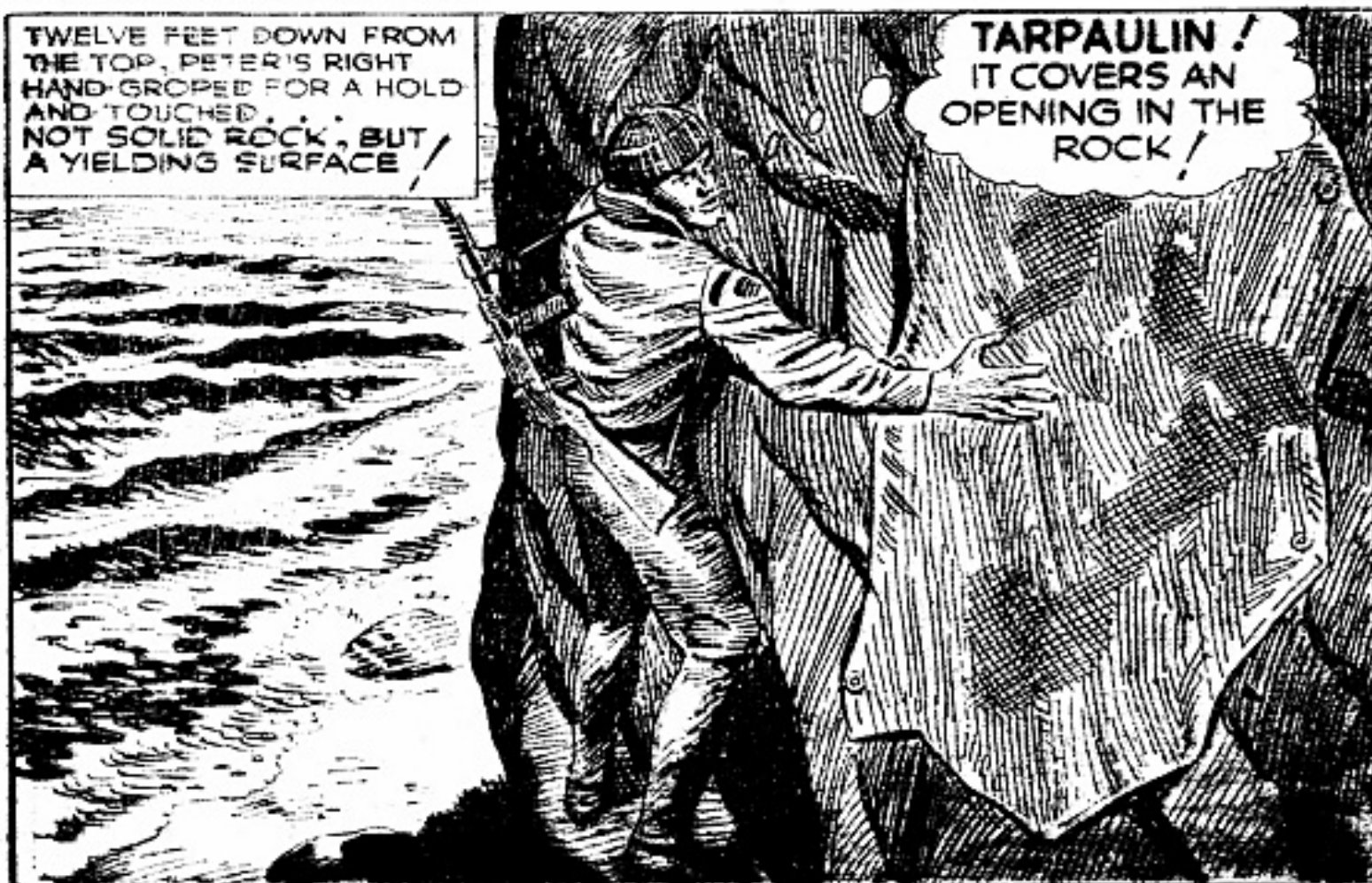


DETERMINED NOW TO UNCOVER ALL HE COULD OF THIS MYSTERY, PETER WENT TO THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF OPPOSITE THE VENTILATOR . . .



TWELVE FEET DOWN FROM THE TOP, PETER'S RIGHT HAND GROPE FOR A HOLD AND TOUCHED. . . NOT SOLID ROCK, BUT A YIELDING SURFACE /

TARPAULIN !
IT COVERS AN
OPENING IN THE
ROCK !



STEADYING HIMSELF ON A NARROW LEDGE, HE GENTLY PULLED ASIDE THE EDGE OF THE HEAVY TARPAULIN . . . THERE BEFORE HIM WAS THE DEADLY SECRET OF THE CLIFFS !

GUNS!

COVERING THE BEACH
AT POINT BLANK RANGE /
ANY LANDING IN FRONT
OF THESE WOULD BE
A MASSACRE !



CLINGING LIKE A LIZARD TO THE ROCKFACE, PETER EDGED SIDWAYS ALONG THE LEDGE . . . AND FOUND ANOTHER CONCEALED CAVERN CONTAINING TWO MORE 88 m.m. GUNS . . . **THEN . . .**

IT'S DON!
HE MUST HAVE
COME BACK FOR
ME!




A SMALL PIECE OF ROCK CRUMBLED BENEATH PETER'S FOOT AND FELL. INSTANTLY THE NAVAL OFFICER BELOW SWUNG ROUND, HIS REVOLVER POINTED MENACINGLY UPWARDS.



FOR ONE BREATHLESS SECOND DONALD'S FINGER TREMBLED ON THE TRIGGER. . . THEN RECOGNITION FLARED AND HE UTTERED A LOW GASP.


PETER!



PETER PULLED HIS BROTHER INTO THE SHADOWS AND IN TERSE, WHISPERED WORDS TOLD HIM OF THE TERRIBLE DISCOVERY HE HAD MADE.

THIS BAY IS A DEATH TRAP, DON — THERE IS A BATTERY OF EIGHTY-EIGHT MILLIMETRE GUNS HIDDEN IN CAVES IN THE CLIFF!

WHAT? BUT... BUT I'VE JUST SENT THE SUB BACK WITH THE INFORMATION THAT YELLOW BEACH IS ENTIRELY SUITABLE FOR A LANDING!





A JERRY PATROL STOPPED ME FROM GETTING BACK TO THE CANOE IN TIME, DON. IS THE CANOE OVER BY THE ROCKS AGAIN?

YES. WHERE WE HID IT BEFORE!

THEN WE'VE GOT A CHANCE OF SAVING THE DAY! WAIT HERE, DON, WHILE I NIP OVER TO THE CANOE AND BRING BACK THE GRENADES!

NOW IT WAS PETER'S TURN TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE SITUATION, FOR DONALD SEEMED TO BE PARALYSED BY THE FEARFUL THOUGHT THAT HIS WRONG INFORMATION MIGHT COST THOUSANDS OF LIVES.

THE OTHER DEFENCES HERE ARE VERY LIGHT... THEY WERE RELYING ON THE SURPRISE EFFECT OF THE EIGHTY-EIGHTS. SO IF THEY WERE PUT OUT OF ACTION, IT WOULD BE PLAIN SAILING. I'M GOING TO LET THEM DESTROY THEMSELVES. WAIT HERE, DON.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THEM, PETE. WE CAN'T HOPE TO STORM THE GUNS, JUST TWO OF US?



ONCE MORE THE SURE-FOOTED COMMANDO SCALED THE CLIFF UNTIL HE REACHED THE LEVEL OF THE HIDDEN GUNS . . .

A SLIT HERE SHOULD UNCOVER THE GUN'S MUZZLE .



WHEN THE GAPING MOUTH OF THE GUN WAS BARED, PETER WRAPPED A GRENADE IN HIS CAP COMFORTER AND THRUST IT A FOOT DEEP INSIDE THE BARREL .

THAT'S WEDGED IT TIGHTLY . . . AND WHEN THE FIRST SHELL HITS IT . . . **WHAM!**



NOISELESSLY, PETER CLAMBERED FROM GUN TO GUN, AND IN EACH HE LAID A SMALL BUT HIGHLY DESTRUCTIVE GRENADE, RAMMED IN WITH PIECES OF HIS WOOLLEN JUMPER WHICH HE HAD CUT UP BEFOREHAND. AT LAST IT WAS DONE.

BY GOLLY, NOW I SEE WHAT HE'S GOT IN MIND! BUT WE MUST HURRY!



WITH ALL HASTE, BUT AS SILENT AS THE SHADOWS, THE TWO BROTHERS DARTED FROM BOULDER TO BOULDER TOWARDS THEIR CANOE.



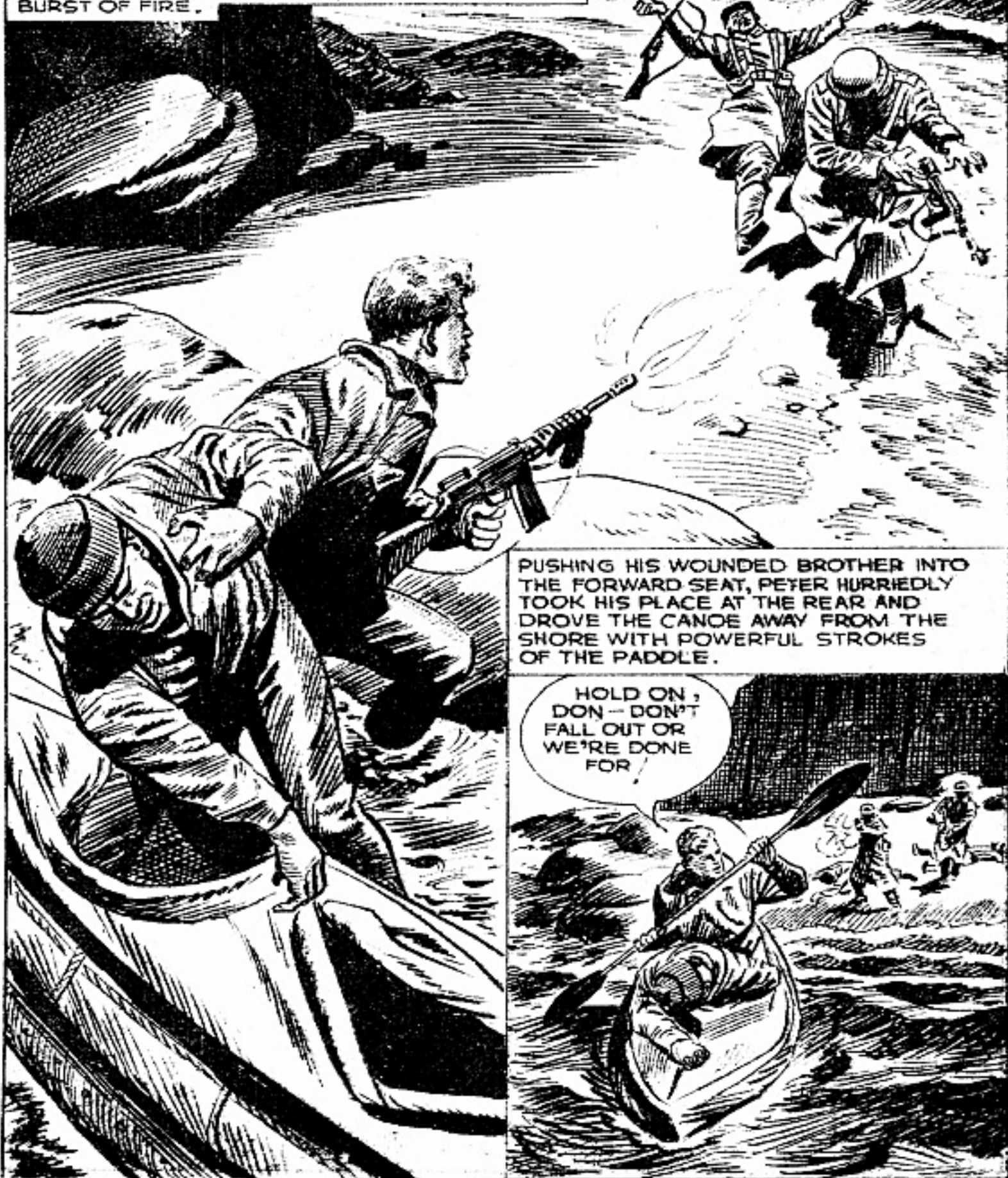
AS THE NAVAL OFFICER BEGAN TO CLIMB INTO THE COCKLE HIMSELF, A HARSH CHALLENGE RANG OUT FROM FURTHER UP THE BEACH, FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY A STACCATO BURST OF GUNFIRE . . .

HALTENSIE!

AAAGH!



PETER CONRAD'S TOMMY-GUN FLAMED INTO LIFE AND THE GERMAN'S WEAPON WAS SILENCED AS HE TOPPLED FORWARD TO THE SAND. ANOTHER ENEMY SENTRY APPEARED OUT OF THE GLOOM, AND HE, TOO, WAS CUT DOWN BY THE RAPID BURST OF FIRE.



PUSHING HIS WOUNDED BROTHER INTO THE FORWARD SEAT, PETER HURRIEDLY TOOK HIS PLACE AT THE REAR AND DROVE THE CANOE AWAY FROM THE SHORE WITH POWERFUL STROKES OF THE PADDLE.

HOLD ON,
DON—DON'T
FALL OUT OR
WE'RE DONE
FOR!

THE COCKLE WAS SOON OUT OF RANGE OF THE ENEMY'S FIRE, BUT PETER DID NOT RELAX HIS EFFORTS FOR A MOMENT. . .

DON'T LET
ME HEAR DAD
SAY ANYTHING
AGAINST YOU OR
THE ARMY AGAIN,
PETE. THANKS,
LAD!

THAT'S OKAY,
DON. SAVE YOUR
STRENGTH -- WE'VE
GOT A ROUGH RIDE
BEFORE US! KEEP
YOUR FINGERS
CROSSED WE DON'T
MISS THE INVASION
FLEET.

THIRTY GRUELLING MINUTES LATER, AS THE FIRST RAYS OF DAWN
LIT THE EASTERN HORIZON, THE LOW RHYTHMIC POUNDING OF
SHIPS' ENGINES REACHED THEM. . .

IT'S THE INVASION FORCE!
DEAD AHEAD AND APPROACHING
FAST!

LET'S HOPE
THEY SEE THE
TORCH. . . OR
WE'LL PROBABLY
BE RUN
DOWN!

THE SIGNAL WAS SEEN, HOWEVER, AND A FAST, ARMED MOTOR LAUNCH IN THE VAN OF THE INVASION ARMADA DREW ALONGSIDE THE CANOE.



DONALD AND PETER WERE TAKEN STRAIGHT TO THE WHEELHOUSE OF THE LAUNCH AS IT ONCE MORE GATHERED SPEED.

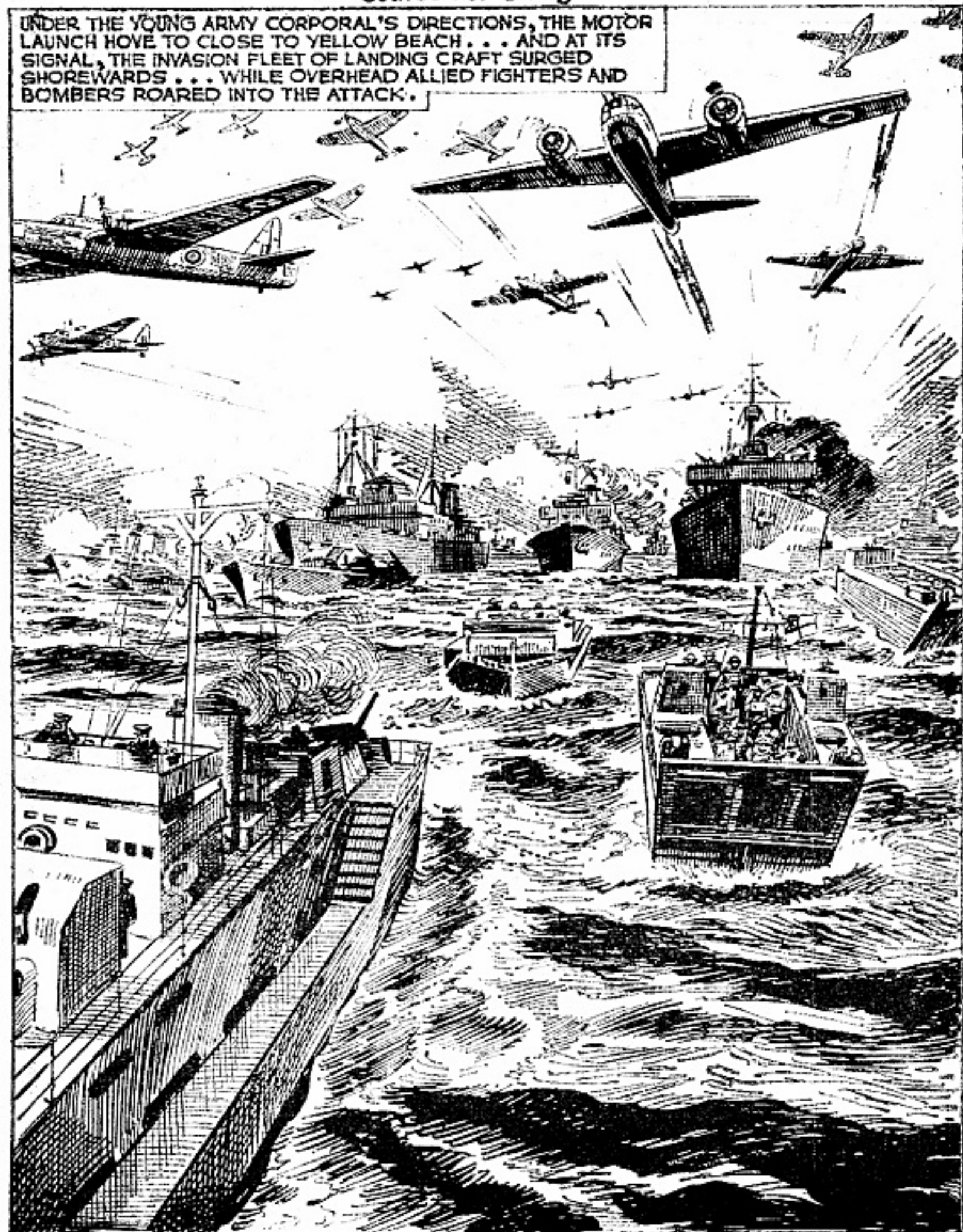
THIS IS
COMMANDER
CONRAD,
SIR!

GLAD TO SEE YOU, SIR . . .
I THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN LEFT
BEHIND ON THE BEACH. WE LAND
IN EIGHT MINUTES. ARE THERE
ANY SPECIAL OBSTACLES
AHEAD?

THERE
WERE . . . BUT
THEY'VE BEEN
TAKEN CARE OF BY
THE CORPORAL
HERE. HE WILL
PILOT YOU IN.



UNDER THE YOUNG ARMY CORPORAL'S DIRECTIONS, THE MOTOR LAUNCH HOVE TO CLOSE TO YELLOW BEACH . . . AND AT ITS SIGNAL, THE INVASION FLEET OF LANDING CRAFT SURGED SHOREWARDS . . . WHILE OVERHEAD ALLIED FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS ROARED INTO THE ATTACK.



TENSELY, THE TWO BROTHERS STARED TOWARDS THE BEACH AS THE FIRST CRAFT LANDED AND THEIR GREAT RAMPS CRASHED DOWN. ALL WAS QUIET. HAD THEY LED THESE MEN TO THEIR DEATHS, OR WOULD THE CONCEALED ENEMY GUNS DESTROY THEMSELVES WITH THEIR FIRST SALVO?



STILL THE GUNS WERE SILENT... THEN THERE WAS A DEAFENING ROAR AND THE CLIFF FACE SEEMED TO ERUPT!

IT WORKED!
THE GUNS
HAVE BLOWN
THEMSELVES
TO PIECES!



NOT ANOTHER SHELL WAS FIRED BY THE ENEMY BATTERY...
AND TANKS AND INFANTRY POURED ASHORE IN AN EVER-
GROWING, IRRESISTIBLE FLOOD.

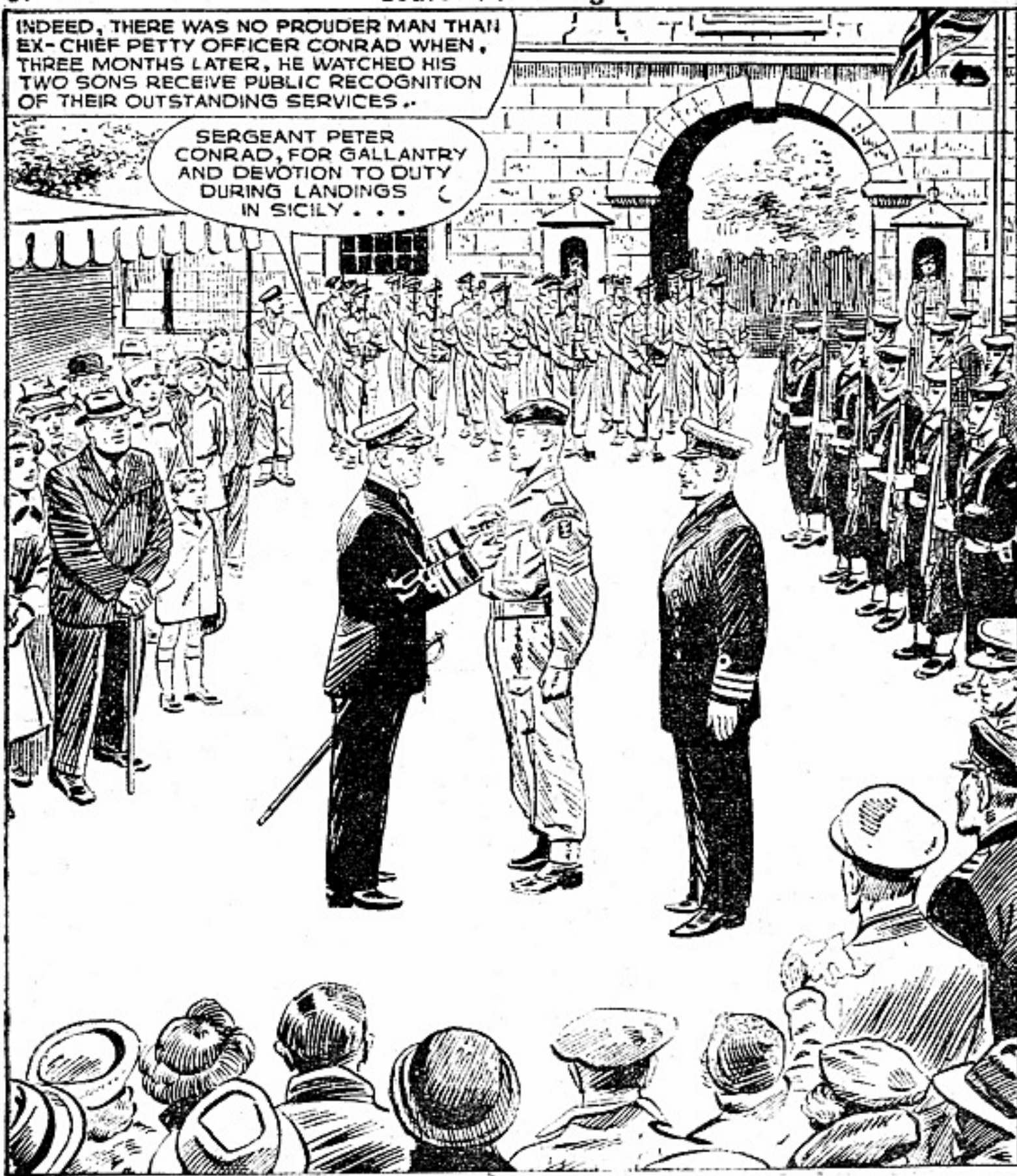


LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DONALD CONRAD,
R.N., TURNED TO PETER AND THERE WAS A
GLEAM OF PRIDE AND RESPECT IN HIS EYES.

WELL DONE, PETER...
YOU SAVED THE INVASION
FLEET AND THE LANDING.
I'M PROUD TO HAVE SERVED
WITH YOU... AND DAD
WOULD SAY THE SAME IF HE
WERE HERE.

INDEED, THERE WAS NO PROUDER MAN THAN EX-CHIEF PETTY OFFICER CONRAD WHEN, THREE MONTHS LATER, HE WATCHED HIS TWO SONS RECEIVE PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF THEIR OUTSTANDING SERVICES.

SERGEANT PETER CONRAD, FOR GALLANTRY AND DEVOTION TO DUTY DURING LANDINGS IN SICILY . . .



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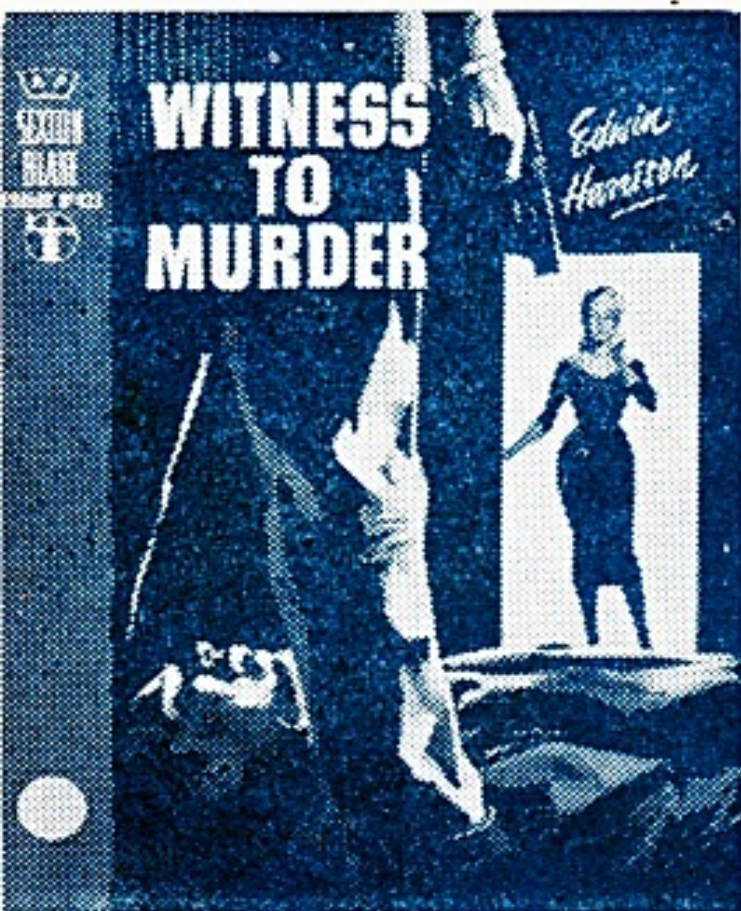
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